

A KEY TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

ALVAH S. HOBART

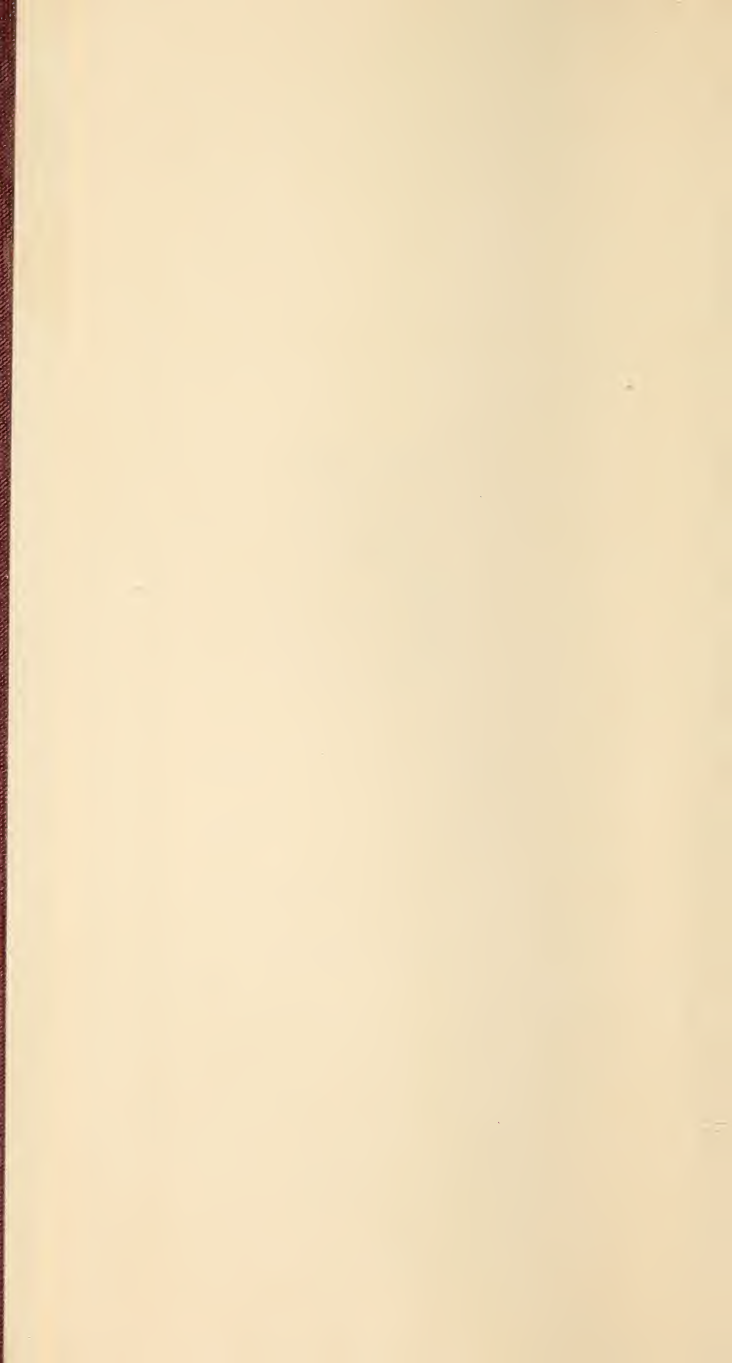


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A Key to the New Testament

A KEY TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

Or
LETTERS TO TEACHERS CONCERNING
THE INTERPRETATION OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT

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A Word of Introduction

THE foundations of this book were letters used in a correspondence course with men who had not received theological training, but were engaged in Christian teaching of some sort.

So many words of commendation of these simple treatments of important subjects have come to the author that he has been led to brave the criticism which the publication of such works is sure to call forth, in the confident belief that the very simplicity of the letters will be the measure of their usefulness.

They are only helps to study. They are necessarily condensed. It is intended that teachers will give them meditation as well as reading.

A. S. H.

CROZER SEMINARY, January, 1911.

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I

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERPRETATION

TO the students "scattered abroad, greeting." In these few pages I shall try to give you some brief hints about the studies which are necessary to make you safe and helpful interpreters of the New Testament to the congregations or classes of which you may be the teachers. No one can do more than guide you in your studies. Interpretation is like swimming in one thing, namely, you cannot learn it except by practice. Books and teachers make good helps; they cannot give you the power to do the work. That comes by its natural development, in response to your own endeavors.

What is the science of Hermeneutics? or, to give it a better name, the science of Interpretation? The word comes from the Greek word *Hermeneuo*, which means to explain, and to make plain. The Greeks used to have a myth that Hermes was the

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messenger of the gods. They got his name from this word *hermeneuo*, because he was sent to make plain the will of the gods to men. He was the bringer of divine messages and the interpreter of them. The interpreter of the Bible is one who makes the meaning plain. We use the word interpreter also to mean the man who takes the ideas of a Frenchman, for example, and puts them into our language, so that we who do not know French can know what the French say.

The latter use of the word is about the same as translator. But translate means less than interpret. A translator is one who puts the language of another nationality into our speech and leaves the results. His work is done. He is not concerned with the effect it has on those who read. Perhaps his work is printed, and remains as a standard for a long time. All he needs is a knowledge of the two languages.

Interpretation is a work requiring more men and more variety of talent. One translator may answer for a nation for many years, but every generation must have its interpreters, and every congregation its own interpreter.

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There is also a moral and a spiritual demand in the work of interpreting which the work of translating does not require. The man who interprets comes face to face with people. He is not merely writing an impersonal book which will remain, but he is taking hold of men's hearts and minds to impress the truths of the Scripture for their good on them now "while it is called to-day." He cannot be satisfied to state the meaning of the text and leave it. He must bring heart and mind in all the variety of their powers to bear on his hearers that they may get the truth into their lives, and their lives into the way of the truth. No man does good interpretation who does not thus look for the results in men as the final aim of his interpretation.

The man who merely puts into *correct* wording what he thinks is the meaning has not done his work well. He must get it into *effective* wording; get it not into the language in which his audience read and write, but into the language in which they think. To know some rules and follow them is only the hollow shell of interpretation. It is no more like the real interpretation than thumbing on the keys of a piano

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is playing the piano. There may be correct notes, but no music. There may possibly be tunes, but no hearts moved. Interpretation takes the records of divinely guided life and instruction which the Scripture furnishes us and reanimates them, and brings them into touch with men to quicken religious life in them. As an interpreter you will seek not simply to tell what you have learned, but to re-create in your hearers the good experiences which are recorded in the book.

If you look at this matter of interpretation in this light you will see that there is no more worthy or noble service to which you can give your talent than this. It is not all you have need to do if you are a preacher. As such, you are a shepherd of a flock, and you are to guide and inspire them to good conduct. You may often have occasion to speak on practical everyday topics. You may need to give your own conclusions about living questions. All this is in the nature of lectures. And the lecturer gives his best. But it is human wisdom when he has done. It may be wood, hay, or stubble. (See 1 Cor. 3:12.) But when you interpret the word you bring

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not only the results of your own thinking, but the wisdom of God is in it. Such thoughts stay with men. They become a fountain of comfort and inspiration to them after the personality of the teacher has been forgotten. In my experience I have found that not only the more appreciative words have been spoken about my interpretative work, but the effects of such work, and the echoes of it in the prayer meeting have been more abundant. It is under such preaching that men and women grow to be strong Christians. It sometimes occurs that the men in the pew can read and think very well for themselves, and so in a measure dispense with this kind of work by the pastor. But in the great majority of cases the people will be small in religious stature if the pastor neglects this work. There will be hopeful children born into the kingdom, who will become living examples of arrested development because of poor nutrition.

You have already begun to see that this work is a many-sided work, and has much to attempt. For example, there are many words and phrases which have become strange to us and need explanation, as

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Gates of hell, The kingdom of God, Our Passover is slain, Stand before God, Gifts of the Spirit, Pharisee, Sadducee, etc., etc.

Then there are parables like those in the thirteenth of Matthew. Here we have a kind of teaching which was intentionally obscure to some. Jesus' own disciples needed to have the parables explained. The story of the Sower was a meaningless story until he gave to them in private the key to its thought. Then they saw that he was giving them advance information about their work and success as preachers.

Then there are such passages as are in the fifteenth of Luke, which are not exactly parables, though the name is applied to them. But they are a different kind of parable. They are not concealed instructions, but illustrative stories. The special lessons of such are to be made plain.

In John 10:1-5 we have pure allegory, interesting and instructive; but one that is almost universally misunderstood except by the trained interpreter. Even those to whom it was spoken did not understand it until Jesus explained it.

Miracles also are to be explained. Some of them are said to be acted parables. I

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think a better name is dramatic actions. But whatever the name it is often a question whether they teach, and if so, what they were intended to teach. Examples of such are found in Luke 5:1-11 and John 21:1-11. So, also, in the eighth of Matthew, a series of miracles is recorded which some say are acted parables or dramatic actions. Whether they are or not is a question, and if they are, what they teach is a question.

There are types also in the Old Testament which foreshadowed New Testament events. To explain these correctly is to enrich men's ideas of the far-reaching thoughts of God for men's welfare. (See Heb. 9.)

Symbols too are found. What they teach needs study and explanation. Especially is this true in the book of Revelation. (See, for example, the following chapters, 5, 6, 7, 8.) Apocalyptic visions are full of mystery even to the interpreters. You will find enough to humble any pride of intellect you may have when you come to examine that book of visions.

But even these are not the greatest things to be interpreted. The events themselves

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which are recorded were only a part of the events which took place. Why were those events which were put in the record put in, and why were others left out? What was the purpose which each writer had in mind that controlled his selection? We take it for granted that no book was written in a haphazard fashion. Some controlling idea was at the bottom as a sort of informing principle. We cannot well understand the book unless we find that purpose which controlled its creation. To find it and show it is a great service.

But most important of all are the events in Jesus' life. The facts of that life are full of significance immeasurably above the significance of other men's lives. The death of Jesus was as much above the death of Paul, and the resurrection of Jesus as much above the resurrection of Lazarus as Jesus was greater than Paul or Lazarus. To show this is important.

You see by this brief glance at the task of the interpreter that it is a many-sided work.

The work naturally divides itself into two departments—exegesis and homiletics.

Exegesis seeks to acquire the meaning of

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the book. Study of its language and study of other history is a part. Study of Christian experience is a most important part. So that he who undertakes to be an exegete will find he has a task which will give play to all his powers. He will have a work he need not to be ashamed of.

The preacher seeks to impart what he has learned. This will be another great task. It will include all that commonly goes under the name of Homiletics and Preaching.

This latter I do not attempt to write about. The former will be my theme in the following letters.

II

THE NEED FOR INTERPRETATION

IT is quite likely that you may be asking why there need be any special science or special study for the interpretation of the Bible any more than for the interpretation of any other book. When we read other books we take the obvious meaning of the words and the statements, and we need no other key to the meaning. Is the Bible, which we are taught to think of as in some way a book God has given us, so hard and mysterious that we must have specially prepared men to make us understand it?

It is hard to answer that question with a "yes" or a "no." If I were obliged to answer it with one or the other, I should say "no," for that would come nearer the truth than the other. But it would not be the correct answer. If there were any other book like the Bible, it would need as much skill to interpret it as the Bible

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does. If any other book had been clothed with so much mystery, and covered up with so much well-meaning but empty superstition, it would require as much study to dig away the débris and expose its beauty as it does to bring out the beauty of the Bible.

Let me mention some of the things which have created the need for the science of Interpretation, or, to use the other word, the science of Hermeneutics. (I am not sure that it can properly be called a science.)

1. The pre-Christian religions used to have some men or women who were called "oracles," or "sibyls," or "prophets." These persons were supposed to speak for the gods. The Greeks had a place at Delphi where the vapors of a spring were said to put the sibyl into a sort of trance, and then she uttered the words of the god in an enigmatic way, which required some one to explain. Some time afterward the later Jewish writers and some of the early Christian teachers mixed up this heathen idea with their ideas of prophecy in the Old and New Testaments. Philo among the Jews, and Origen among the Christians, were prominent in this sort of interpreta-

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tion. (If you can consult the Encyclopedia Britannica or any large Bible dictionary, look under the articles Philo, Origen, Sibyl, Delphic oracle, and Apocalyptic literature.) Origen, for example, says, "The Scriptures were written by the Spirit of God, and have a meaning not only such as is apparent at first sight, but also another which most people do not see. For these words are the forms of certain mysteries and the images of divine things." This great man among the ancients set the example of teaching that a hidden meaning is in the Scripture. That idea has filtered down through all the centuries until now, affecting more or less many interpretations and many interpreters. Among these are the Swedenborgians. They say that the literal sense of Scripture is the "lowest and outward form which divine truth puts on." "The Scriptures are not merely for men, but for angels." "The inhabitants of heaven perceive in them a higher meaning than their brethren of the earth do." "The Scriptures are symbolically written." "All the narratives typify spiritual experience."¹ To them there is a "Science of Correspond-

¹ "Science of Correspondence," Madeley.

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ence" which tells us what each narrative signifies. But they also say that lest men should be ignorant of the spiritual meaning Swedenborg was given repeated and manifold revelations from heaven, in which he was made to know the "interior" meaning. His books are the key to the Scriptures. For if the Scripture is thus a great riddle-book it must have an interpreter. These books of Swedenborg constitute for his followers the authorized interpreter of the Bible.

2. Some men's writings are saturated with the idea that the world will grow better and better until it is fit for Christ's return. Others are equally saturated with the idea that Christ must come first or it will never be fit for his return. Some writers are frequently alluding to the condition of the wicked as "eternal torment," others speak of it as wholly "reformatory," and still others as "destruction utter." These are but examples of what is found in the religious literature. It needs a trained mind to separate the correct from the incorrect interpretations.

3. The Bible is not a book, but a collection of books. It has sixty-six different

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books, written during fifteen centuries. Portions of it have seen the rise and fall not only of nations, but of civilizations. It actually goes back into almost prehistoric times. The writers include kings on their thrones, priests in the temple, prophets in their office, and apostles. They wrote both in times of national prosperity and in their captivity; messages suited to faithful people, and to those who were recreant to all their obligations to God; when they needed rebuke and when they must have encouragement. Its sweep of topics reaches from creation to the perfection of the New Jerusalem. It has the deepest religious philosophy and the simplest of commandments. On account of this, if for no other reason, more care is necessary to interpret it correctly than the ordinary book calls for.

4. But there is more than language to be interpreted. The history needs interpretation, and events also need it. If a man were seeking to learn from the history of the United States the true idea about the currency or of the tariff he would need to know more than the language of the laws or of the newspapers. He would need to interpret the meaning of events in their

relation to his subject. He would need to find out what are the subtle influences of "cheap money" or of "high tariff." So those who seek to interpret Scripture must seek to discover the influences which shaped the history, and point out the lessons of righteousness which are contained in it.

For example, take the captivity of Israel. Has a man interpreted that when he has learned all the details of their life in Babylon and fixed the dates and the names of the reigning kings? By no means. There remains for him to find what the captivity did for them religiously. It was not a mere incident in their history; it was a mighty factor in the formation of the national character and the national religion. Then, if it was so mighty a factor in their national religion, was it accidental or predetermined? If it was predetermined, has the purpose of God in that been fulfilled, or is there still some further purpose in the history of the Jews not yet manifest?

Or take the prophecies about the Messiah. Was Christ foretold, and was his death foretold in Isa. 53? If it was pre-appointed, why was it so? Was the death necessary? If it was, why so?

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Or these imprecatory Psalms 109, or 137: 8, 9. Are these right words of good men put in for our example? Do they show how we should feel toward any one who is against us?

Coming into the New Testament, consider for example the martyrdom of Stephen. Is this anything more than the record of a frenzied mob, who killed him as a mob might kill a Chinaman in San Francisco? If not, what is the difference? and why was this story put in this book?

The community of property spoken of in Acts, was that the pattern for all churches? If it was, is it the pattern for States as well as churches?

Look at the story of the crucifixion. Was it an unfortunate outburst of anger or a part in the predestined work of Jesus? And if he "must needs die," then why? What did it accomplish? And has that purpose been accomplished?

This book of Revelation, what is the meaning of this procession of symbolic visions which troop across the stage of the seer's mind, acting out history for him in this mysterious way? The players of Shakespeare never acted out history more

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intelligently than these apocalyptic actors acted something. What was the something? Was it the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the temple? or was it the far-off history of this whole dispensation?

More important still is the fact that the Scriptures deal with religious experiences. Its records and its biographies are preserved not as records or as biographies only, but as single pieces from which the mosaic of a godly life is to be made. This is a subtle subject. Its value does not lie on the surface. One must get down to the under strata. It is easy to read that David said, "The Lord is my shepherd." But what made him think so? What will come of his thought? How can we have the same confidence?

Look at Rom. 7 and see if the man who mourns over his sinful heart is Paul the Christian, or Saul the Pharisee. If we say the first, then is a Christian so powerless? If we say the second, then is a Pharisee so anxious to do right and cannot do it?

I am sure you will see that with such things before us in the Scriptures there is need for preparation on the part of those

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who would undertake to make them plain to others. If you have ever thought that it was a small or an easy part of the minister's work to interpret the books, you will not think so longer.

It is because of such things that men have thought there is need for study of Interpretation. Professor Agassiz once said that the "Creator had revealed just enough of the wonders of creation to awaken curiosity and lure us graciously on to further discoveries." Something like this seems to be true about the Book. It has truth lying on the surface, just enough to lure us on to further discovery of its riches.

Reviewing our thought, we see that there is a need for special study to fit men to interpret Scripture. This need grows out of the inherited idea that Scripture has a double meaning, coupled with the fact that our literature is full of the results of that double interpretation; the variety and scope of the Bible writings; the need for interpretation of history; and the need for interpretation of men's experience. All these unite to say that we need this kind of preparatory study.

III

THE IMPORTANCE OF CORRECT INTERPRETATION

ALL our religious life is determined by certain deep-down ideas of God. The force of gravity in its influence on the course of a bullet is not more certain than the influence of our ideas of God on the course of our life. We shoot the bullet into the air at a high elevation, and for a time it looks as if it would laugh at the force of gravity. But the force of powder gets weary, the force of gravity does not. In the end the victory of gravity is complete. Men say that they are not troubled about religious ideas, and they are independent of theology; but it is not true. It is in our nature to think of some over-ruling kingdom. The Christian man, of course, thinks God is supreme. But who is this God? What is his character? What is pleasing in his sight? Every man has a latent answer to these questions. The Jew of Jesus' time acted unkindly toward the Samaritan

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and the Gentile, because he thought God was indifferent to them. For centuries he had been trained to that idea. The psalms he sung at his worship and the prophets which were read in his synagogues all rang with that idea. (See the following as illustrations: Ps. 87; Ps. 2; Ps. 46:4-6; Ps. 110; Ps. 137; Isa. 14:1, 2; 45:14.)

The same is true now. The more ignorant Jew or Roman Catholic does not feel that he is as much bound to be honest with a Protestant Christian as he is to his fellow-Jew or his fellow-Catholic. And the reason is he does not think God is pleased with them. As men become better educated they discard that error, and regard the moral obligation as the same toward everybody, because they think God is the same toward all. (See Matt. 5:43-48.)

This idea that we take on the feeling and character that we ascribe to God is under the passage in 2 Cor. 3:18. We behold in the gospel the glorious character of God, and by that beholding are changed into the same image. So in 1 John 3:2. We are not so Christlike as we ought to be because we do not correctly see him. But when his character is more fully known so that we

shall see it more clearly, then we shall be like him, "for we shall see him as he is."

For this reason no part of our study or our teaching of the book is more vitally important than that which sets forth the true idea of God as it lies deep in the Scripture. Our idea of God, when it has been conformed to the Scripture idea, will be a constant fountain of influence to correct erroneous ideas everywhere else and an inspiration to all sorts of noble endeavor.

Our ideals of life are most important. We are coming to understand that every one is controlled in a subtle way by his ideals. The boy imitates his father, or his teacher, or some larger boy, or possibly some loafer he has seen. All educators are now careful about this matter of ideals. It is equally important with grown folk. But in the case of grown folk the better ideals must crowd out the poorer, while with children the place is empty and waiting for an occupant. If therefore we can get from the New Testament the winning and satisfying view of Jesus which it contains, and present it in an attractive way, it will furnish for ourselves and our congregation a complete ideal of life. Men

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will not always follow it as they ought, but they will never lose sight of it. It is with morals as it is with music or painting. The girl who has a musical gift thinks she is quite a mistress of her piano. But her wise parents take her to hear a real master, and at once she moves her ideal up. She can never forget what she heard. She may not equal it, but it will always discourage her self-conceit and lead her on to improvement.

So, when by patient, prayerful study the interpreter has discovered for himself and presented to his congregation the beautiful life of Jesus, he starts a fountain whose waters will never cease to flow. No man who has seen the beauty of Jesus' life can forget it. Even when he goes far astray that memory will haunt him and rob his sinful life of a part of its pleasure, and always beckon to him to return. If you have lived in a community where good men have made that ideal of Jesus familiar, you know what constant uplifting influence it has on all the morals of the village. (See in this connection Phil. 2:5-8; Eph. 4:20-24; Eph. 5:2; 1 John 2:6; 2 Peter 3:1, 2; Rom. 13:14; Col. 3:10.)

It increases the joy of life. The joy of Christian service is dependent on the view of our privileges rather than our duties. One may be a faithful Christian and yet not be a happy one. He may, in his feelings, be a bondservant and not a son. Life may be a drudge rather than a delight. Fears may overshadow his heart and anxieties weigh him down. Unless there is some specific endeavor to prevent it, we are almost sure to have a somber view of life. We are face to face with so many of our own shortcomings which give us sorrow; we see so much evil about us; though we do our best, there remains so much that we cannot do that by contrast it appears as if we had done nothing—all these things tend to give a sad tone to life. But if, without losing sight of duty, we can find in the book great truths which will take us up as it were into places where we see life from higher standpoints, minor troubles will be lost sight of in the larger outlook. The angel in the book of Revelation seems to have known this, for after John had looked on the battles of good with evil as they were dramatized before him in several chapters the angel said (chap. 21:9)

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“Come hither, and I will show you the wife of the Lamb.” Then he took him up into a “high mountain apart” and showed him in that symbolic vision of the New Jerusalem the glorious destiny of our humanity.

So there are times when Christians need to be taken into the high mountain of truth away from the struggles of life, and be shown the things which are above and beyond weakness or sin. Blessed is the man who can do the angel's part among us.

And there are such mountains. For example, there is a view of God's attitude toward us far better than the forgiving attitude. The governor of a State may pardon a criminal and not love him. The prison doors may open and he may go out free, and then be allowed to freeze to death on the prison steps. He is pardoned, not loved or cared for. The man who can show how God is better than that, who can make plain the difference between a pardoning God and a gracious God will open a blessed view to men.

He who can find in 2 Cor. 4 a truth which will transform the threatening evils of life into ministering angels will awaken among his pupils songs in the night.

The man who can catch in the smoke of our battle only a fleeting view of conquering reinforcements will put courage into the soldiers of Christ (Matt. 6:10).

There is a view of things which made Paul say "I will glory in infirmities." He who finds that view will be a comfort to his fellows (2 Cor. 11:9).

In Eph. 1:18 Paul prays that men may know "what is the hope of his calling and the glory of his inheritance." Those in whom this prayer is answered will have found a hidden treasure indeed.

These are but samples of hidden truths which lie scattered through the New Testament inviting our discovery. He who finds them will not only be saved himself, but will, like a good shepherd, "go in and out and find pasture" for his flock.

It largely insures correct methods of Christian work. We all naturally seek to conform our method to our aim. If we have, for example, an idea of the kingdom of God as a great Rome-centered, world-wide organization to which is committed the duty of administering baptism and sacraments, through which the grace of salvation is to come, we shall do as the Jesuit

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missionaries among the Canadian Indians used to do—risk our lives to baptize children. If we think the kingdom is a loosely organized lot of congregations of believers, we shall put our strength on the single church with little attempt to organize. If we think that the great business of the kingdom is to promote earthly, material comfort and financial equality, we shall make our endeavors in the line of social work and study, and the sixth of Acts will be a prominent chapter with us. If we think that the kingdom is not material mainly, but is a state of society in which men accept God as their Lord, and love as their ruling principle, we shall preach and teach thus. If we think that men are made Christian by education, we shall educate; if we think it must be by conversion, we shall be evangelistic. So also, if we think that future generations will see great increase in wickedness, when evil will grow in power until it crowds Christian life into the background; when deception will be more abundant; until the patience of God is exhausted—if, I say, this is our conclusion from the Scripture, we shall not lay broad and deep foundations for Christian

civilization, but will build temporarily and try to "hold the fort" until Jesus comes to do something worth doing. If we think that preaching the gospel, which has thus far subdued nations to a measure of faith in Christ, is the appointed means of conquering the world for Christ, and that as heaven imparts its own characteristics to what meal it comes in contact with, so the world life will gradually come into accord with Christian teaching, then we shall seek to educate man and to touch the world in as many ways as we can, expecting to see the fruit of our labors. (See in connection with this, Matt. 28:18; Acts 6; Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 14:40; 1 Tim. 1:3, 4; 2:1-3; 3:1-13; Rom. 9:31-33; Matt. 13:24-29.)

I think I have written enough to show how important this matter of interpretation is. I want to add a word about the evil of careless or erroneous interpretation. If the Bible is of enough value to justify us in taking it into the pulpit or the class and teaching from it, it is entitled to honest treatment. A minister who opens the Bible in the pulpit, or a teacher who assumes to teach it, makes an implied promise to present in his teaching what the passages teach.

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To take a passage and then warp its teaching into what the writer never meant to say or to teach is to insult the writer, and to deceive those who do a man the honor to suppose that he is teaching what his passage contains. If a political speaker should so use his authorities as to misrepresent what they say, he would be called arrantly dishonest. If he said he did not mean to be, men would reply that his business is to find out before he uses such authorities. It is not less dishonest because the writers of the New Testament are dead and cannot resent the insult. This kind of use for Scripture has first a demoralizing effect on the man who does it. He knows he is not honest in his use of the book. He brands himself as willing to do a dishonorable thing. And secondly, he either makes his intelligent hearers despise his interpretation, or despise a book which is so incapable of good interpretation. More infidels are made by incorrect interpretations at the hands of believers than are made by the arguments of unbelievers. It is legitimate to address men without texts. But it is dishonest and dishonorable to take a text and not try to present its teachings.

IV

WHAT IS THIS BOOK WHICH WE ARE TO INTERPRET?

WE call the Bible the "Inspired Book," and "The Word of God," or the "Sacred Volume." These names for the book raise the question, How does the inspiration of the book affect the interpretation of it? We find various answers to that question. Some say, "Why, certainly it affects our interpretation. Its inspiration makes it a unique book in every way. Of course it is to be interpreted in a unique manner." Others say, "Yes, it is unique in its contents, but not in its language or literary form. It is a revelation of things beyond our invention or discovery, but the fact that it attempts to be a revelation implies that it will be in a language like other books or it would be not a revelation, but a riddle."

Now how are you and I, who are only common sort of folk, going to settle this question when the uncommonly wise ones

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do not agree about it? Some may be disposed to say, "Well, it is too much for us, we will not bother about it." Others may say, "We will take the man we like best and follow him." Well, there is a way different from these. Some of us will tackle the problem ourselves. We will look at the facts as we find them and form our own judgment, and as fast as we get a judgment we will go according to it, and will hope to get more and more things settled as we go along. Let me now point out some of the facts which we all see for ourselves.

First. Whether the book is inspired or not, it is a perfectly human book in its form. It may tell wondrous things about the New Jerusalem and about John's visions, but the language is not, on the face of it, different from the language of all men when they talk about the same sort of things. Grant if you will that it brings God's thoughts, yet it is man's grammar. It may be God's wisdom, but it reasons with Paul's logic. And though its thoughts transcend our thoughts, its words do not get beyond our dictionary. The grammar and logic and rhetoric are all the same as the grammar and the logic and the rhetoric of

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Homer's "Iliad" or Bacon's philosophy. Any man who knows the common laws of language can know the language of the Bible. The singular nouns have singular verbs, the objective cases follow the same prepositions; and the same figures of speech and the same kind of arguments run all through it. I want to emphasize this because many will feel at the start some vague reverence toward "sacred rhetoric." This is not at all necessary. A metaphor is the same in the Bible as it is in Shakespeare. There is no more sacredness about a metaphor of the Bible than there is about the arithmetic of the Bible.

And conversely, if you do not understand your own English literary language you cannot understand the language of the English Bible. My own observation is that many ministers are not well versed in their own language, and so fail to understand the Bible language. *Study your own mother tongue outside of the Bible and it will help your understanding of the Bible.* Rev. John Watson, the gifted author of "The Bonny Briar Bush," said if he had his life to live over he would give more attention to the English language.

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Secondly. This book is not only human, but it has about all the varieties of human writings. See the first five books of the collection. These are called the books of the law. They are Genesis, a short sketch of the beginnings of things; Exodus, a narrative of the going out from Egypt to Mount Sinai; Leviticus, a collection of rules for the Levites to observe in the services of the Jewish worship, almost all taken up with ceremonies, a book of ritual; Numbers, a story of wanderings in the wilderness until the Israelites came to the Jordan ready to cross into Canaan; Deuteronomy, a second statement of the law and the ritual with modifications.

After these we find them more secular in some respects, and in some more biographical. They are Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther. In all the world's history men and women have been the central forces. So in this history these books have a semi-biographical character, and yet it is a sketch of the history through which Israel passed. You see when you read these books that they are narratives of events. They are not "sacred" narratives, but just

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plain narratives of some good men and more bad ones. They tell both sides of the story. They are "unvarnished tales," but they are not like newspaper tales. They are not muckrakers. Nor are they slanderers of mankind. They are not pessimistic wails over man's wickedness. But they are such writings as always give us a dislike of the wicked and a strong impulse toward the good. They are profitable for "instruction in righteousness." And that is a part of their purpose.

Then here we find five books that are poetic books—Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Solomon's Song. Now do not get frightened because you find them "poetic," as if that made them fanciful or unworthy of confidence. Their poetic form does not militate against their religious character. God could prompt a man to write a poem if he chose, couldn't he? He could inspire a dramatic play if he chose. Would it discredit him if one of these books were found to be a dramatic composition? It need not. Is not the Twenty-third Psalm a poetic composition? Certainly. No one doubts it. In the New Testament it is said that Jesus and the

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disciples sang a hymn. And in the visions of heaven they sang songs. So we will let these five poetic books have their name and not be troubled about it. Only when we come to interpret any of them we will interpret them by the rules which belong to that class of writings.

After these we have five books called the "Major Prophets." They are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel. Isaiah is made up of a collection of single prophecies uttered at various times and occasions during a long period. Jeremiah is the same. Lamentations is a poetic lament of Jeremiah at the condition of things in Israel. Ezekiel is a record of visions which that prophet saw when he was in the captivity. Daniel is part history of Daniel's work and influence in the captivity, and part a record of visions which he saw.

After these we find twelve so-called "Minor Prophets." These are the prophecies of twelve different men scattered along through some centuries. Each one was addressed to some specific condition of the people, and conveyed God's message to those people at that time and for a specific purpose. And when we come to

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interpret them, of course, it will be necessary for us to get in touch with the circumstances and spirit of the times in which they were uttered. Such is the character of the book as it stands. There is not a word in it which intimates that it was intended for some strange people and to be understood by some mysterious law of language. Those writers wrote for men, and they wrote in a way that the "wayfaring man though he be a fool need not err therein."

These writings were collected before Christ's time. They constituted the Bible he used to read and which he said "testified to him." If for no other reason, they would be of great value on that account.

Now we come to the New Testament. Here we find at the first glance four narratives concerning the words and work of Jesus. Reading them even in a rapid way we see that the first three are very much alike. They tell much of the story in language quite similar; but each book has portions which the others do not have. For example, Matt. 3: 1-12; Mark 1: 1-8; Luke 3: 1-18; Matt. 4: 1; Mark 1: 12; Luke 4: 1; Matt. 8: 16; Mark 1: 32; Luke 4: 40.

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And again they all view Jesus as it were from the outside. On this account they are called the "synoptic Gospels." That is, they take one viewpoint. But the fourth book is very different from the other three. It has much more individuality, and the writer seemed to think more about the inner meaning of Jesus' teaching.

But in none of these books do we find anything which suggests that they were to be read in some exceptional way.

After these we find a historical book (Acts), which traces the growth of the gospel ideas and the growth of the church for a few years under the leadership of Peter at first, and then of Paul. This book intimates in 1:1 that its purpose is to tell what Jesus did through his apostles after his ascension.

Then follow thirteen letters of Paul on special difficulties and doctrinal topics of living interest at that time. Not one of these letters sounds as if he expected that it was to be put in a Bible afterward. He probably would not have objected if he had known it. But they were letters primarily to those people and to us only in a secondary way and by inference.

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After these come some "General Letters," by James and Peter and John and Jude. These too are directed to specific conditions, and can be interpreted only in view of those conditions. Then the "Letter to the Hebrews," which is called Paul's, but his authorship is not certain. It is a discussion with some Hebrew people about the relation of the law to the Christian gospel.

Finally comes the Revelation, which claims on its first page to be a revelation of things which must "shortly come to pass." It is a strange book. After seven letters to seven churches, it gives the record of visions which the author had seen. They were symbolic visions. If he had seen the things themselves, it would have been difficult for us to interpret. How much more difficult when we see that they were only visions at the first! This book combines all the difficult elements of interpretation in one problem.

Such then is the book as it appears to any intelligent reader of it. It has in it nearly every variety of human composition. And we must be prepared to vary our mental operations from one thing to

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another as we come to these various kinds of writing. But again I say we are to do just as we would with any other writing of the same literary class; just as we would if we found in the same book sermons by Beecher, a history of Abraham Lincoln, and some hymns by Bonar. The truths we get from these Bible writings may be better than those we should get from other writings, but the method of getting them is not different.

Each book is of its own age, and the age is of the book. Its imagery and its conceptions of God and of duty are a reflection of its times, and must be so understood.

If you will accept this and keep it in remembrance, it will give you calmness of mind and soundness of judgment. It will prevent you from looking at single texts as if they were mottoes. Carlyle somewhere said that a certain kind of critic was like a fly sitting on the cornice of some splendid temple, who, squinting at his little circle of observation, saw nothing of the beauty of the building. This broad way of looking at Scripture, which I have outlined, will deliver us from that fly kind of narrowness in our interpretation.

V

MEANING OF WORDS

YOU will smile at the simplicity of the suggestion that any special study of words is necessary. You may think that such should be taken for granted. But in this study the "little and the simple" words which are said to compose the Bible will need care. There are three things which conspire to make the meaning of words in the English Bible somewhat more elusive than the words of our common literature.

The fact that our common Bible was translated in 1611, three hundred years ago in England, by some Episcopalian clergymen supported and directed by the king is one. Other translations had been made, which in some respects were more accurate than this. But this had the support of the government, and after a while became the almost universally recognized book for the English-speaking world. Excellent as it is, it has its

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imperfections. It was made by men who were under orders not to change any ecclesiastical words. This gives to some such words a vagueness of meaning which must be cleared up. For example, the words bishop, elder, shepherd, pastor, church, Easter, deacon, baptism, ordain, lay hands, consecrate, sanctify, all have a meaning different from their common use now. You will need to study the connections and see what meaning was, in the circumstances, the necessary one. Dictionaries and commentaries will help you much, but your own judgment will usually assure you of their meaning.

Again, the English language has changed much in three centuries; and while the letters and the spelling of the Bible have been kept up to modern ways quite thoroughly, the wording has not been altered. As a result, many words in the Bible are either wholly out of use elsewhere or are now used in a different sense. Of these, the following are examples: Num. 20:3, chode for chided; Dan. 3:21, hosen for stockings; Ps. 4:2, leasing for lying; 1 Cor. 16:22, maranatha for the Lord cometh; Ps. 7:16, pate for head; John 20:16, rab-

boni for master; Luke 17:6, sycamyne for sycamore; Luke 14:32, ambassage for message; Nahum 3:19, bruit for report; Zech. 1:19, fray for fight; Mark 7:11, corban for gift; Acts 21:15, carriage for baggage; Rom. 1:13, let for hinder; 1 Thess. 4:15, prevent for go before; Rom. 11:2, wot for know; Luke 17:9, trow for think; Gen. 25:29, sod for boil.

There are some words still remaining in the latest, the so-called Standard Bible, which are English, and are unfamiliar to American ears. In England, where the version was made and where the services of the church are more generally conducted with the Prayer Book, which has the same old English, there is little trouble; but in this country many words are still in need of explanation. You will find help first in the American Standard revision. But the best help in this matter is the version of the American Bible Union.¹ That is an American book and an independent translation. You will find great help in these things from consulting both versions.

¹ Published by the American Baptist Publication Society, Philadelphia; also "The Modern Speech" by Richard Francis Weymouth, published by Baker & Taylor, New York, and the Twentieth Century New Testament.

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Some time in the distant future it may come to pass that the American people will have come to prominence enough in the world to have a Bible embodying their peculiar forms of speech, as the Hottentots and the Chinese do; but just now we must get on with a Testament borrowed from our Episcopalian English cousins.

The frequent reference to customs and ceremonies of the Jewish people which are now entirely out of existence demands attention. For information about these reference must be had to the Old Testament, and such explanations as can be gotten from the New Testament. I have gathered some of the more prominent ones and given you the references which in a swift way will help you to see the method.

From Matthew:

Angel. Heb. 1:14; Matt. 4:11; 13:39;
Mark 12:25.

Baptize. A ceremony instituted by John as a confession of faith in Christ. The Greek word means to immerse and then emerge.

Beelzebub. Matt. 12:25.

Bottle. Josh. 9:4; Matt. 9:17; Luke 5:37.

Blasphemy. Words which were considered derogatory to the divine character.

The Christ. Not Jesus when "the" precedes it, but the looked-for Messiah, the appointed one.

Disciple. It was the custom for teachers and philosophers to be accompanied by those who were willing to acknowledge themselves pupils of such teachers. These were called disciples—that is, pupils or learners.

Elder. Originally a man of experience, but soon an official: Gen. 50:7; Exod. 3:16; Matt. 21:23; 26:59. In the Christian church: Acts 11:30; 15:4; 6:24; 14:23; 1 Tim. 5:17; James 5:14.

Fan. An instrument for separating chaff from wheat.

Feast of the Passover. Exod. 12:1-28.

Feast of Unleavened Bread. Exod. 12:1-28.

Hell. A word used in our Common version to translate two very different words and ideas. One is "hades"; the other "gehenna." Hades means the abode of all dead. It is about equivalent to "grave." The other word means God's overwhelming punishment and overthrow

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of wickedness. It is founded on the narrative found in 2 Kings 23:10, where Josiah defiled the home of idolatry in "Ge Hinnom," which means the valley owned by Hinnom. The Standard American version makes a distinction in translation. In the Greek "Gehenna" is used only in the following: Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43-47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6.

Hosanna. A term of praise to God.

Herodians. The party that yielded religious scruples to please Herod.

Leper. A man who, by reason of a loathsome disease, was regarded as obnoxious to God, and therefore shut out of temple and worship.

Law. The term used to designate the first five books of the Bible and their commandments.

Legion. Six thousand soldiers.

Oven. A brick or mud receptacle, which was heated by burning grass in it and then used to bake bread. Matt. 6:30.

Priest. Exod., chap. 28, 29.

Proselyte. A man not of the Hebrew race who adopted the Hebrew religion.

Pharisee. Matt. 5:20; 9:14; 16:6; Luke

11:42-44; 7:30; 11:39; 16:14; John 1:24; 7:32; 11:47; Acts 23:1, 8.

Preparation. The day before the Passover.
Potters' field. The meaning and history unknown.

Synagogue. Equivalent to "local church."

Sadducee. Acts 23:7, 8.

Shew-bread. Exod. 25:30; 1 Sam. 21:6; Heb. 9:2.

Sign. Exod. 8:23; Judg. 6:17; Isa. 7:11; Luke 2:12; Exod. 31:13; Matt. 12:39; 1 Cor. 1:22; 14:22.

Tormentors. Officers to torture prisoners to make them confess or to pay money.

Talent. A large, but to us unknown, sum of money.

Veil of the temple. Exod. 26:31-33; Heb. 6:19; 9:3-8.

Wilderness. Mountain country—not necessarily uninhabited.

Worship. Often used to mean the bowing down to men as a token of esteem, not the same as worship to God.

The following are taken from the book of Hebrews. You will be able to understand them only by reading carefully the book of Leviticus and getting the tabernacle and its services well in mind:

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Salvation, sanctify, throne of grace, high priest, tithes, Levitical priesthood, tabernacle, second veil, ark, covenant, city of living God. Church of first born, mediator, without the camp.

Then there is a special difficulty which belongs to the nature of the subject. Religious life is a growing life. Not only does the individual grow in spiritual experiences so that he has later in life experiences which were unknown to him early in life, but the Christian life as a whole is in advance of religious life in the Old Testament times. Abraham, Moses, and David had experiences very precious; but John and Paul had experience beyond them. When the writers of the New Testament sought to express their ideas they could only use words and phrases originally made to express ideas smaller than their ideas. So the words are made to do a larger duty than the Old Testament called for, and to convey ideas richer than they carried in the Old. This is not peculiar to the Bible. If a man wrote in the sixteenth century about the "liberties" of the English people, he meant much less by the word "liberty" than we now mean by it. "The rights of

men" signified a much smaller idea then. A little while ago when a man said "public franchise" he was understood to mean "a donation from the public of the right to rob the public." Now he is understood to mean "a responsibility to serve the public." New ideas concerning these things have swelled the meaning of the words.

Among these religious words, for example, the word "atonement" (Lev. 16: 10-16) meant the ceremonial act which was appointed to symbolize the continued favor of God to Israel. It was ceremony only. It carried no idea of repentance or of God's appeased anger. But this word in Rom. 5: 11 means the whole redemptive work of Jesus, by which God is shown to be just and the justifier of those who believe.

"Forgiveness" meant, in the Old Testament, generally the remission of the penalty for sin. In the Christian use it means the restoration of that fellowship which sin had interrupted.

"Sanctify" meant to set aside to God's use. Now it means to be fitted for God's use and then set aside to it.

"Grace" in the Old Testament meant God's willingness to give to us without price

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what we asked for. In the new use it means the pouring out upon us unasked, and more abundantly than we know how to ask or think, of the riches of his gracious disposition. See Eph. 1:7; 2:7; 3:2; 4:7; Rom. 3:24; 5:7, 8.

“ Kingdom of heaven ” meant the establishment of earthly material prosperity; now it means the dominance of Christlikeness carried out in all our relations to our fellow-men and toward God.

I think from these examples you will see that the use of words is not confined to their dictionary meanings nor to their strictly ancient use, but that in the New Testament they are surcharged with the experiences of Christian men. See also 1 Cor. 2:7-16. These things are sufficient to indicate the lines of special inquiry you will need to make in study of Scripture words.

But now outside of these special inquiries there is a great necessity to observe the meaning of words as used by each writer. This would be true in any book, for men have uses of their own for words. You will find these by carefully reading and observing the shades of meaning which fit the place where a word is used.

Take the word righteousness for example. When Jesus uses it in Matt. 3:15, "it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," he means do all that is required of us to be right. In 5:20 it means our obedience to the requirements. But in Rom. 1:17 it means something entirely different. It has a legal flavor there—a certain something on account of which God, as Judge, will account us as pardoned.

Or the word "judgment." It may mean, as in Matt. 10:15, the day when God will judge the world; or it may mean the act of God in deciding whether we are guilty or not; or it may mean the punishments God inflicts (Ps. 19:9).

The word "faith" may mean the thing that is believed, as in Jude 3, "the faith once for all delivered to the saints"; or it may be the attitude of heart toward God as he is made known to us. See its use in the eleventh of Hebrews. Compare it also with Paul's use in Romans. And then compare with John's word "believe," and see the difference.

In this inquiry you will find your path quickest and surest by the question method. Ask what meaning will fit this sentence?

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What other meanings are possible? I think the exercise most fertile in insight to the thought of Scripture is the question exercise. Question and cross-question a passage until it gives up its full meaning. Take, for example, the passage "Christ died for sinners." What does it mean to die *for* sinners? Was it for the good of sinners? or because of the badness of sinners? or in the place of sinners? How shall we answer? The word "for" has all these meanings. We must inquire what was Paul's general idea about this death of Christ. And we find that he generally conceived of it as a death in which Christ suffered vicariously. Until you have searched the entire field of possible meaning you will not be able to say which is the most suitable one.

Or take the word "peace," in Rom. 5:1. Does that mean (1) we have an inward sense of tranquillity; or (2) that we have ceased to be at war with God; or (3) that the relations between us and God which sin had disturbed are now amicable?

We see that (1) is not the meaning, for he is not discussing our inward feelings; (2) is not, for he is not discussing our at-

titude toward God ; but (3) is the meaning, for he is setting forth what follows if God is satisfied to justify us.

This will be sufficient to indicate a line of study always profitable and usually necessary. It will also have an excellent effect on your own use of language, for the man who can discriminate well in his choice of words has a wide margin of advantage over the man who simply opens the floodgate of language.

VI

THE STUDY OF THE GRAMMAR

I DO not know how well you know the English language. From what I see of students who come to Crozer Seminary from all sorts of schools, I am led to think that the study of language in the schools is very superficial, and that few men give it sufficient study to make them accurate in their expressions or analytical in their study of literature. Greater emphasis on the study of the English language is to be desired.

If my observation is correct, and you are among the neglected and negligent ones, you will need to be patient in this letter. You cannot possibly be an accurate interpreter without grammatical inquiry. The old-fashioned parsing book of perhaps unsavory reputation must come down from the attic of your memory—if indeed it ever got into your memory at all—and become your helper now. We have studied words, but now we must study sentences, for the

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sentences are larger units of construction than words. I shall not undertake to give you a letter on grammar, but I can sort out some of the leading things in grammatical study, and show you where to apply your knowledge of grammar in the matter of interpretation.

In reading a passage note carefully first what is the subject of the sentence, then the verb, and then the object. Drop out all other words and see what idea is left. That is the framework of the sentence. For example: Rom. 2:3 reads, when thus skeletonized, "Reckonest thou . . . that thou shalt escape?" Ver. 4, "Despisest thou God's goodness, . . and treasurest wrath." Ver. 13, "The doers of the law shall be justified . . . in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men." Eph. 1:4, "He chose us in him . . . that we should be holy." Ver. 9, "Making known the mystery of his will . . . to sum up all things in Christ." Eph. 3:1, "I Paul (. . . to ver. 14) bow my knees unto the Father that he would grant you . . . that ye may be strengthened . . . to the end that ye may be strong." These skeletons may then be filled in with the modifying words and clauses.

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Relative pronouns. After the subject, verb, and object have been located the modifying clauses are to be sought out, and their individual contribution to the meaning discovered. These clauses are introduced in various ways. One of the important ways is by pronouns. For example, in Gal. 1:3 we read, "Grace be unto you . . . from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ," and then Paul introduces the modifying clause, "Who gave himself for our sins." In those verses the pronoun "who" is one of the windows through which light shines out of the sentence, and through which we look into it. Again, in Eph. 2:8, "We have been saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." In this sentence we have the direct statement, and then the demonstrative pronoun "that" introduces an additional thought. To what does "that" refer? Does he mean "that faith" or "that salvation by grace"? Which is this gift of God, the faith or the salvation by grace? One way makes a man powerless to believe, as a dead fish is to swim; the other leaves him power to exercise faith if God is gracious enough to accept his faith as an

equivalent for works. So in many places the pronouns must be studied.

Then there are modifying clauses introduced by participles. For example, in Eph. 1:4, 5, "He chose us in him . . . *having foreordained* us to adoption as sons." This indicates that before he chose us in Christ he had already determined that it should be through Christ that he would bring us to sonship, and hence the next thing to do was to call us to Christ.

Again, Eph. 4:25, "Wherefore . . . speak truth one with another," is the exhortation; but he inserts the participle, "*putting away falsehood.*" That shows that he meant one to come first to the decision not to be false in any particular, and then as a part of the result of such decision speak truth.

Another kind of clause is introduced by conjunctions. For example, Matthew says Jesus did so and so "*that it might be fulfilled* that was written by the prophet, saying." Some would read it "*so that* the word of the prophet *did* come to pass." Others read it "to *the intent* that the words of the prophet *should* come to pass." One must look carefully into such cases to dis-

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cover the truth as the writer saw it. Was it purpose or result?

Therefore is illative almost always—that is, it shows that the sentence to which it belongs is a conclusion from some other sentence. It is very generally followed by a sentence beginning with *for*. As illustrations of this, turn to the following passages: Rom. 2:1, “Therefore thou art inexcusable . . . *for*,” etc. Rom. 2:26, “Therefore the uncircumcision will judge . . . *for*,” etc. Rom. 5:28, “Therefore we conclude . . . *seeing*,” etc. You will find it a very profitable exercise to go through a few chapters and discover these illative sentences. You will find that a *therefore* is like the outcropping of white stones on Vermont hillsides, a sign that good marble lies underneath. Suspect a good doctrinal quarry when you see such a sign.

Because is another conjunction which has one meaning. It is causal. Whenever you find it look back to see what statement it gives the reason of. Examples are Rom. 1:18, “Wrath is revealed . . . *because*,” etc. Rom. 1:20. They are without excuse . . . *because*,” etc. Rom. 4:14, “Faith is made void . . . *because* the law works wrath.”

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This word occurs about four hundred times in the New Testament. The frequency of it is very suggestive. The writers of those books did not expect men to accept their dictum as authority. They appealed to men's common sense and reason every time they wrote the word. "Do this, or believe this, or rejoice in this, *because* there is good reason for it, and this is the reason," seems to be implied in that word *because*.

For, as a conjunction, has about the same meaning. It is used more than a thousand times in the New Testament, and it has the same suggestion of the reasonableness of the teaching. Make a study of the various uses of that word and you will be astonished at the argumentative character it gives to the chapter you read.

But is always adversative. It brings something to the front which was not included in the former statement. Matt. 1:19, "Joseph was minded to put her away, *but*" a new thought comes to him of a different kind. The skies of his thought change. Matt. 3:13, "Jesus comes to be baptized, *but*" a new idea is brought out, quite different from the first. John said No. See also Matt. 4:4; Rom. 5:8, 15;

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6:17, 22; 7:6, 8, 23; 9:31. In Paul's writings these adversative words are very strong, and give a vividness to these writings which makes them impressive.

Also is another of the words with uniform meaning. It carries the idea that there are two things in mind, and one of them is an added thing. Some fine ideas are discovered by attention to this word, and especially to its position in the sentence. But I am sorry to say that in our Common version the use of *also* in about half the cases is wrong, in that it has the wrong position in the sentence. It ought to precede the word or sentence it modifies. (This is corrected in the Revised.) Look, for instance, at Matt. 2:8, "That I may come and worship him *also*," means as it stands that "I may do something and besides that may worship him." But the thought is that, "That I, in addition to you, may come and worship him." It should be "I *also* may come and worship." This is one of the cases where the man who knows no Greek is at a disadvantage, for the Greek makes it plain. Matt. 13:23, "He that hears, and understands, and in addition bears fruit." Acts 24:26, "He hoped *also* that money

would be given him." As it stands it says that he hoped for something—it does not tell what—and in addition he hoped that money would be given him. The *also* should precede its verb. The thought is that he postponed, and he *also* hoped for money. In Rom. 11:21, "Take heed that he '*also* spare not' thee." This is wrong, for the idea is that in addition to the natural branches you *also* will be unspared. But in the twenty-third verse the word is rightly placed, "They *also* as well others," etc.

Another class of clauses are introduced by Prepositions. Some of these require and repay careful study. The more important ones are for, of, in, into, through.

For, when it is used as a preposition (not as conjunction), joins the idea of one word to another word. For example, waited *for* the kingdom of God, baptism *for* the remission of sins, I thank God *for* you all. This needs no explanation, except to notice that it is a preposition.

Of. Your dictionary will give you several meanings, but they are all related to the idea in the word from. The Son *of* man is the son who comes from man. The Son *of* God is the son who comes from

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God. Source is the dominant idea. Then as a secondary idea comes *possession*. The sword *of* Goliath. The family *of* David. Sometimes it means *characterized by*; as son *of* consolation, son *of* wickedness. But there are two very important uses which need to be observed, in such clauses as, the *judgment of God*, the *faith of God*, the *love of God*, the *righteousness of God*. When the act or feeling expressed in the clause is exercised by God it is called a "subjective clause." When the act or feeling expressed in the clause is exercised toward God it is called an "objective clause." For example, in Rom. 8: 39, "Nothing shall separate me from the love *of* God." If Paul meant to say that nothing could stop his loving God it would be objective; but if he meant to say that nothing would stop God's loving him it would be subjective. The meaning is often difficult to determine. One way to get light is to substitute the word *to* or *toward* for *of*, and see if it will make sense. If it will it is *objective*. If you can substitute *from* it is *subjective*.

In. The foundation idea of this is represented by a ball with a dot in the center. The dot is in the ball. In most cases this

is simple, but there are places in the New Testament where this idea is the one which alone fits the meaning, and which, when once you see it, will give a new glory to your faith ever after. Consider the following: Eph. 1:4, "Chosen us *in* him from the foundations of the world." That is, from the beginning God had planned to give us every spiritual blessing *in* Christ. "Even as (in accord with the same purpose) he chose us *in* him." We are not "chosen of God" apart from Christ, but when we are *in* him we are chosen. Eph. 1:6, "Which he freely bestowed on us *in* the Beloved." We are not recipients of his grace outside of Christ, but *in* him we are. See also Eph. 2:10; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 John 5:20; Rom. 8:1; Col. 2:10; John 15:7; 2 Cor. 5:17.

I think you will find in these passages, studied with your attention on the *ins*, an uplift to your faith you will never forget.

Unto. Some men have objected to this word, but it stands in the Common version, and has a special value. It always carries the idea of motion toward and up to its object. Matt. 3:13, "Jesus came from Galilee *to* the Jordan *unto* John to be baptized of him." "Baptism of repentance

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unto remission of sins." It was a movement toward and an ending in remission. Matt. 11:28, "Come *unto* me." John 4:36, "Gathered fruit *unto* life eternal." Acts 19:3, "*Unto* what were ye baptized?" that is, what was the aim and outcome of your baptism? See Rom. 5:21; Heb. 6:11; 1 Thess. 4:7; Heb. 3:14; 12:4.

Through may mean the agent or the means. Rom. 7:25, "I thank my God *through* Jesus Christ," means that Jesus is the agent of God to deliver Paul. Rom. 6:11, "Reckon yourselves alive *unto* God *through* our Lord Jesus Christ." That is, Christ is God's agent in making us alive *unto* God. See also the following: Rom. 5:9; Eph. 2:18. If we get the viewpoint of these passages we are like Jacob as he looked up in wonder in his dream and saw angels of God ascending and descending on the ladder, but the "Lord stood above it" (Gen. 28:13). Through the various secondary agencies Christ's own love shines. These texts all forbid us to veil his face in our teaching.

But there are many passages where it only conveys the idea of means. See Rom. 3:7; 3:24, 25; 4:20; 6:21; Gal. 2:19.

VII

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

A COMMON error is the idea that because figurative language is used the meaning is obscure and the statements unreliable. A little examination of the following will show you at once that this is not the case. "The Lord is my shepherd," "Jehovah is my rock," "Pillars of the church," "O sword of Jehovah, how long wilt thou not be quiet." Ps. 102:6; Matt. 5:13; 6:3, 12, 22; 7:24-27; Luke 13:32; 14:7-11; John 3:20, 21; 4:36-38; 6:35; 11:25; Eph. 6:14-16; Gal. 5:22-26.

Figurative language is used for two reasons. First, because in the poverty of language, there are not words sufficient to express all our thoughts, or we are too limited in our knowledge of the language. Secondly, because the figure is more impressive than the plain statements. The underlying principle of figurative language is likeness or analogy of some kind. The

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various figures of speech most common may be said to rest upon likeness entirely. That likeness may be in form, or substance, or act, or function, or purpose; and the key to understanding figures is a discovery of the point of likeness between the figure and the thing spoken of. Of the various figures the following are the more important:

Comparison. This compares things of the same class. Thus one might say that the love of David and Jonathan was like the love of women.

Simile. This compares in some one or more particulars things of one sphere with things of another sphere. Thus we say a man shall be like the shadow of a rock in a weary land. The comfort men get by trusting a good man is likened to the cool restful feeling when a man hides from the sun behind a rock. Our question is always, In what particular is a man like a rock?

Metaphor. This is based upon likeness, but the likeness is not stated. The great and most useful figure of the Bible or of any language is the metaphor. I must be quite full in my treatment of this figure. The word means "carried over." The thought is carried over from one thing to

another. When you think of it you see that our spiritual life and our mental life must all the time borrow words from our material life. (Will you turn to the fifth of Matthew and examine only the verses 3-9, and see how many words are thus borrowed. They are kingdom, inherit, hunger, thirst, filled, heart, see.)

This is especially true when we speak about God. We borrow nearly all our words from those that belong to men. For example, the "arm of the Lord" (Ps. 89: 19; 98: 1; Isa. 40: 10, 11; 51: 5; 52: 10). The "eyes of the Lord" (Ps. 33: 18; 11: 4; 66: 7; Isa. 11: 3; 1: 15; 1 Peter 3: 12). The Lord "looketh" (Job 28: 34; Ps. 33: 13). The Lord "heareth" (Ps. 17: 1; 34: 15; 84: 8; 116: 2; Isa. 5: 9; James 5: 4). We also ascribe to God the feelings and motives which we are accustomed to ascribe to men. This often gives perplexity to those who think all biblical statements are literal. Thus God is said to "repent," and to "look to see," and to "judge." It would appear as if he needed to be informed about things, and as if he made mistakes and needed to learn by experience. All such expressions must be taken as in a

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sense metaphorical, used because we have no words except borrowed ones with which to speak about God.

(If one examines the fifty-third, fifty-fourth, and fifty-fifth chapters of Isaiah he will find many illustrations.)

The same is true about the future life. We cannot express our ideas of it except in words of this world. If you were to try and tell your idea of heaven, what would you say? The same would be true if you tried to tell what you think about the condition of the wicked. This was as true of the writers of the Scripture as it is of you. And it was as true of Jesus when he talked as it is of you when you talk. If he had come with a set of words about heaven which were not earthly words, men would not have understood him any more than a child can understand us when we talk in scientific terms about things they have not seen. A chemist knows what you mean when you say you want to get some "chloride of sodium" or some "monoxide of hydrogen," but a little child and a man untrained in the language of chemistry will not know that you want some common salt or a drink of pure water.

Because of this the Scripture tells of heaven as a city with streets and walls and gates. It tells of hell as a place of fire and torments. But these statements are figurative. And the words for heaven are no more figurative than the words for hell. We must find out the meaning which underlies the figures.

The metaphor has its basis in likeness, but instead of saying things are alike, the metaphor speaks about one thing as if it were another. For example, "Ye are the salt of the earth," and "if the salt hath lost its savor," and "henceforth it is good for nothing." You see how the Saviour is talking about men in the words that belong to salt. But he only thinks of things in which the salt and the men are alike. He does not think that men are soluble, or inexpensive, or white. But he has in mind the fact that good men keep the world from becoming morally corrupt. In that particular they are like salt which keeps meat from becoming corrupt. He has in his mind an image of salt. You might almost say that he sees salt and talks about men.

Suppose now that you never knew anything about salt. You could not get any

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meaning from his words. If I were to write to you saying, "A minister is a fogleman to his church," probably you would not know whether I meant to say that he did them damage, or stirred them up, or was a heavy financial burden, or was a sort of expensive luxury. As a matter of fact, I said none of these. Will you look up that word fogleman and see what I did mean?

The point that I am trying to impress is that we must know what is the *basis* of the metaphor or we lose the idea it is intended to convey. Take a case from the sixteenth of Matthew, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Now, what does he mean? Your interpretation is dependent on what you think he had in mind when he said "hell" and "gates." Nine out of ten, I suppose, of common readers do not know what he did mean. They have a vague idea of "fire and brimstone" in connection with "hell." "Gates" is without much meaning. And so the real meaning, which is a very precious one, goes unseen. Out of these considerations grows the rule for understanding metaphors:

Find out what was the image or object in

the mind of the writer or speaker which gave shape to his words.

Of course you will see that this is sometimes a complex undertaking. It will necessitate a knowledge of the times and customs. It will require some knowledge of their literary works and habits, and a knowledge of their religious views. With some passages it will be a long time before you will satisfy yourself about the meaning. But this rule will open at once for you a great number of the passages which otherwise would be obscure. And you will find in those which you can understand sufficient material for your preaching to keep you busy while you are learning the others.

I want now to lead you in the study of some of the more important metaphors, and then I will ask you to study a list of others and determine for yourself what the basis of each one is. Please notice that I do not in this ask you to find the meaning of the passage, but only the *basis* of the metaphor.

Let me take a difficult one to begin with—"The gates of hell." If we turn to the Revised version we find it reads "Gates

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of Hades.” Now, what does hades mean? Look in your dictionary, and you will find it means the abode of all departed spirits, or the grave. Now, what does “gates” mean in this connection? It may mean the literal gates which were supposed to shut up the abode of the departed, or it may mean the authorities that rule over the place hades. In the first case we have the idea that even the dead will not always remain in the grave if they are Christ’s people. The gates cannot keep them in. In the second case it means the forces of death will never take away the life of the church. It will live on always.

“Kingdom of heaven.” What is the basis of the metaphor kingdom? Think of a kingdom and see what is the uppermost idea in your mind. Is it place? or is it the state of things when men honor the king? We say the kingdom of the Czar is shaken; we mean the authority of that man over his subjects. In that same way we say the kingdom of heaven is the authority of heaven over men. “Thy kingdom come” means thy authority be recognized down here in earth as it is recognized up in heaven.

“The whole armor of God.” The apostle had a certain picture in mind as he described the Christian man. That picture was not of a soldier armed like ours, nor was it a heavy-armed Roman soldier. It was probably a man in the arena fighting for life. His armor was as given. The shoes were similar to baseball shoes, made so they would not slip on the floor.

“Buried with Christ in baptism.” The basis here is a man buried in water.

“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” The basis is the peculiar action by which the leaven permeates (not corrupts) all around it and transforms it into its own character.

“I am the light of the world.” The basis is the sun, by its light giving cheer to all the earth.

“The fruit of the Spirit.” Here the picture is a tree laden with the products of a season.

“The sword of the Spirit.” That with which a man defends himself and defeats the enemy.

So through many changes and in many forms language pictures its ideas on the mind.

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For the sake of making this clear and indelible, will you study the following metaphors and see the basis of the comparison in each:

Rom. 6: 4; 2 Cor. 4: 2; Rom. 3: 13; Rom. 7: 23-25; Gal. 3: 27; 1 Cor. 15: 23; Matt. 25: 41; Matt. 18: 10; Matt. 26: 26; Matt. 10: 38; Matt. 3: 10; Matt. 3: 12; Matt. 23: 33; 1 Cor. 3: 9-15; 1 Cor. 10: 24. In seeking the light on these, it will be well to consult commentaries if you can do so.

VIII

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE—CONTINUED

IN the preceding chapter I wrote about analogies of several kinds. In this one I want to carry the thought a little farther. There is a class of figures in the Bible which, while they are metaphors in character, have some elements which make them a distinct kind of expression. For want of any other name I shall call them "great metaphors." They occur in passages which contain ideas more than usually beyond our power to express. A common name for them is "apocalyptic passages." The special characteristic of them is that they deal with ideas and events in the religious world which are so great or so much outside man's life that no activities of men or any common activities of nature will answer as a basis of metaphor to express them. As an example, take the Eighteenth Psalm. Here is the conception of God's resistless power; of his anger at those who were

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doing harm to his people; his immediate response to their cry; and the terror of his judgments. They are all too great for any common simile or metaphor. No plain description would be at all adequate to the occasion. No mere philosopher, or logician, or rhetorician could handle such conceptions. It needed the poetic gift to write, and it needs something of the poetic to read it. Read the psalm, and you will see all the ideas are of the divine measure. And to whom will the writer liken him? "He taketh up the isles as a very little thing." The victorious march of Alexander or Cæsar would belittle it. So he takes these great creations—earth and mountains, and clouds, and winds, and heavens—and pictures them as shaking with fear, and smoking with fire, and raging with anger, and spitting fire with hail. That awing, man-subduing, upsetting of the natural course of things impresses one with the presence of a divine power moving resistlessly to deliver him.

Another one is found in Joel 2:28-32. Here there is in the mind of God a purpose to do what never had entered into the heart of man to conceive. And the way it is to be

brought about is as strange as the purpose is great. First of all, the doors of his blessings are to be swung wide open. Upon all classes of men in Israel he will pour out his Spirit; and not only on them, but upon all flesh. Now he comes to think of what will accompany this opening of doors. Ver. 30: "I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood." Picture in imagination, if you can, what a condition that describes. All that had been relied on to give light and warmth and life seems to have vanished. The most certain and well-established things become unreliable. What can that suggest? We get the interpretation in Acts 2. Peter said that the gift of the Spirit to all classes was the fulfilment of the first part of this prophecy. And the destruction of the whole Jewish economy was the fulfilment of the rest of it. If there was one thing the Jew felt sure of it was that Jerusalem was the favored city of God, that its future supremacy among the nations was as certain to come as the sunrise. Its sacrifices would always be acceptably offered on the altars by the sons of Levi. Now we see

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the national life of Israel forever ended; the temple forever closed; the sacrifices become useless; the priesthood forgotten; and Israel no more to God than any other nation which will believe on Christ. If you could think of a pious Jew having gone to sleep three years before Christ was crucified and then wakened in a few years after the destruction of Jerusalem, what an utter bewilderment he would have! All that he supposed to be permanent was gone, and in place of it a company of men preaching God's love to all men, worshiping in all places, and claiming earthly dominion in none. He would well say this is indeed what Joel said to us.

This kind of metaphor was common in Jesus' time, as a reference to Jewish writings will show. And so when he wanted to touch them effectively, he used such figures.

See Matt. 24:29-31. What a picture that is! It suggests the greatest upheavals of old and established ideas in religion. It suggests a great change in the relation of the world to Jesus. When he spoke he was about to be crucified, but then he would be here in glory coming from above. Then there would be a great proclamation by

angels, which would gather from all parts of the world those whom he had chosen.

Now I am quite sure some of you will say, You are taking out of this all the reality, making the largest things in the book figurative. But this is not the case. These things are stated as they are because they are so large that nothing else will avail to express them. Figurative language does not belittle reality. Let us go back to simple metaphors and see how reality is expressed in them. The influence of Christians in the world is real enough, is it not? And yet Jesus called it *salt*. The reality was made the more evident by the figure. So in the story of the Prodigal Son; it was a parable (which is only one kind of metaphor). All the drapery of that story may be changed, but the heart of it is that God loves sinners when they are away, and welcomes them back. That is the reality in the core of the story. The fictitious story or (lest you may misunderstand the word fictitious) the created story was used to make the truth real to the hearers. So these great metaphors have a real kernel of real truth in them. Jesus knew that his coming to do what he told the woman of Samaria

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he would do (John 4) would upheave all existing ideas. And it has done it. How could he better tell it at that time than to use those figures in Matt. 24, in which the impression is that all things old are changed?

Look at 2 Thess. 2:1-12. No one can picture this scene fully in his imagination. But there is a weird sort of air about it which awakens awe and reverence for God, and at the same time a confident feeling that a hand is at the helm of human affairs which is not to be palsied, and that final victory over Satan is to be won by revelation of truth.

In 2 Peter 3:10, we have another. Imagine the scene, if you can! It is utterly unimaginable! But yet there is the perfectly distinct feeling of an old order of things destroyed, and a new one far better inaugurated. Newness and purity are as evident as daylight. In those particulars the picture is accurate and instructive.

But you may feel like saying, "Oh, you are reducing religion to feeling or impression. If you do that it will not make any difference what we use to arouse the feelings with. Error will be as good as

truth!" I should be glad if I could talk with you about that, for it is difficult to write on such things and not be misunderstood. But I must beg you to let me try and express my thought briefly. Up in New England, where I was brought up, it was the general idea that a sermon which told you something new or proved something old to be a little more certain was the only good sermon. To have heard a sermon and remembered its argument was to have profited by the day's worship. On that plan no interpretation of a passage is good which does not add to our assets of knowledge. But I appeal to you if knowledge is the only or chief asset of religious life? Do not the devils know and tremble? Are the best theologians necessarily the holiest men? When you have learned a new idea are you always at once put in a frame of mind to carry it out? No! No! We have more than intellect. Intellect is interwoven with all our activities, but they all have an element besides intellect. There is the feeling life. The emotions have their field. Unless this feeling life is moved by religious truth religion will be a formality.

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Scripture has much in it which appeals only to the feeling life. For example, the descriptions of the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation. No one supposes that the walls of a great city are built as those were; or that gates are to be of one single pearl. But the splendid effect of all those descriptions of that city is to create an impression of the completeness of life in the final. It is an impression on the feelings that is sought. Or take the parable of the Good Samaritan. Can any one doubt that the Saviour's description of the wounded man's deep trouble was given to touch the feelings of his hearers? It certainly was not his intention to give us a knowledge of the way they treated wounds in those days. It would move then, and it has ever since then moved to emulation of the Samaritan's kindness. It is not knowledge that is gained, but an impulse of tender kindness toward the needy, and dislike for that pretentious piety which sees no neighbor in the man who is not of our persuasion.

God made us all with many strings on the harp of our life. Life's music is not complete if some of the deepest and best feelings are not used. Reverence, awe, the

sense of holy places and things, are all a part of the moral forces and a part of the religious enjoyment of life. So I say interpretation may and must try to bring out of the Scripture what is in it. And if there is in some passage elements which do not yield answers to our questioning intellects, but do yield great comfort, or inspiration, or restraint and fear of God, it is a fine interpreter who can bring such elements into play, and a deficient one who does not.

Let me recapitulate. When a writer had the largest conceptions of God he could not find any direct language to express them. And when he sought for metaphors he could not find in the common affairs of men or in the regular operations of nature anything which would express them. He therefore chose such forces of nature, and ascribed to them such actions as would create—not an intellectual conception of the matter—but the feelings of awe and reverence and confidence in God which he wanted them to have. And at the same time he would leave the great realities standing out like mountains on the plains, indistinct but certain.

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I should say therefore that in these passages we shall get what they are intended to give if we do not try to make them minister to our knowledge, but only to our feelings. Shut your eyes and try to imagine such things, and see how you would feel and what you would expect if in such times you knew God and trusted him. And those dominant feelings are what you are to cultivate in your religious life, and those dominant expectations what you may justly cherish for the future of the kingdom. You may profitably experiment with these suggestions on the following passages: Exod. 38:18-23; Exod. 39:17-20; Isa. 24:16-23; Isa. 35:1-10; Isa. 40:3-5; Micah 4:1; Hab. 3; Zech. 14:8-11.

IX

ALLEGORIES, FABLES, AND PARABLES

THERE are more extended forms of expression which, like metaphors, are based upon resemblances. These are allegories, fables, and parables. They have so much in common that it is difficult to draw lines of clear separation between them, and to classify the passages well even when these lines have been drawn. The divisions which I have used in this chapter are somewhat different from those which I have found in the ordinary books on the subject. They are, however, the outcome of my own study and work as a teacher, and I have found them so satisfactory that I venture to give them to you.

All these figures are alike in several particulars. First, they are all stories. Secondly, they are all fictitious, not real history. Thirdly, they all teach by analogy. Fourthly, they all have a good purpose. But now the lines of distinction begin to appear.

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The allegory proper may be likened to a symbolic picture which has its own beauty and completeness for the eyes which do not see the thing it is intended to symbolize. For example, the ceiling of the Congressional Library at Washington is ornamented by a series of symbolic pictures, each of which has beauty of its own, but also presents in symbol one of the various stages in the progress of the book-making art. So in literature, an allegory is a story complete and beautiful in itself; but it has a hidden meaning, which it is the duty and the pleasure of the interpreter to reveal. Examine in this connection Judg. 9:8-15; 2 Kings 14:8, 9.

The most perfect allegory in the English language is Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." This is a story which children and grown people who do not see its religious significance read with delight. Those who understand it better know that the story of the Pilgrim was intended to show the religious life of the Christian man.

In the allegory proper inanimate things are often personified, and by their alleged actions dramatize the idea to be conveyed. They are somewhat like characters acting

on the stage. There is not much of this sort of literature in the Scripture as I read it; but there are those, however, of whom I have spoken in a former chapter, who read the whole Bible as an allegory, and even regard the earthly life which it records as being an allegory of heaven.

The best allegory of Scripture is found in Ps. 80:8-13, in which the psalmist tells the story of a vine brought out of Egypt, and traces its planting and its growth, and then its being broken down by the boar out of the wood and the wild beast of the field. In this story the psalmist was picturing in that beautiful symbolic way the experience of the children of Israel.

Another one is found in Isa. 5:1-7: "Now will I sing to my beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and he fenced it and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." And then this prophet went on to explain that underneath this allegorical story he

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was presenting the dealings of God with the house of Israel.

Another allegory is said to be in John 10: 1-5.

In interpreting these allegories we must remember that the literal statements themselves are not to be taken as the meaning of the passage. For example, in John 10 we must not suppose that the false shepherds actually sought to kill the sheep, or that the pastor who has a salary is necessarily a hireling, and violates the teaching of the allegory. We must hold to the idea that the allegory always presents relations and truths in one sphere of life or thought which have their corresponding truths in another sphere of life or thought. Here the conduct of the men in attempting to climb up some other way instead of going through the door revealed their character and practically confessed guilt. So the teachers of Israel revealed their character by their wrong way of approaching people.

The fable is a special kind of allegory which differs from others in this, that the actors in the fable stories are usually animals; but human thoughts and feelings and

actions are attributed to them. Fables are used chiefly to teach moral precepts. Two fables are found by some writers in the Scripture, namely, in Judg. 9:8-15 and in 2 Kings 14:8, 9 (and even these might as well be classified as allegories. I prefer to call them so rather than fables).

Parables are distinct from other allegories in this, that the actors in the parables act their parts in their own natural way; and they are used to teach religious truths of a higher kind than the moral precepts of the fable. As parables have a large use in the New Testament, I want to give a little more time to their consideration. There are two kinds of parables:

Parables of Illustration. These are those which are used simply to make certain truths plainer or more emphatic. Of this class are the parables commonly called the Mustard Seed, the Leaven, Dives and Lazarus, and the Rich Fool. There is no argument involved in these.

Parables of Argument. These are by far the more numerous. I shall write about these later. In this chapter I want only to speak about the way in which we may

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recognize them, and how to extract their precious essence. You must examine them to see what sort of analogy they contain, whether it is illustrative or argumentative.

An argumentative parable is one in which the actors of the parable belong in some general way, or from some standpoints are viewed as belonging to the same class, so that what the actor in the parable does is in some degree an indication of what ought to be done by men.

If we think of God and man as, in a certain sense, in the same class—that is, they are both moral beings—then you can argue by analogy that what one does the other will do. But you cannot argue that because leaven influences all that comes in contact with it, therefore the Christian man will influence his surroundings and tend to make them Christian, because leaven and men are not in the same class. You can *illustrate* the influences of the Christian man by comparing with the influence of leaven. But the leaven does not even suggest the probability that a man will do one thing or another. There is no relation between the two which makes it probable that the man will do anything.

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For example, consider the parable of the Mustard Seed. You see that the likeness is not in a vital thing, nor is there any vital likeness between a man and a mustard seed, and therefore it is not an argumentative parable. It illustrates only. The likeness lies in this: the value of the seed is not estimated by its size, or weight, or color, or taste, but by its nature and what it will produce when it has matured. So it is, said Jesus, with the kingdom of heaven. It is not to be estimated by the number of its disciples, nor the city where it began, nor the social, political, or financial standing of its members, but by its nature and what it will do when it has matured its life. That is a good illustration. It sticks in our thought, but it is not an argument.

The argumentative parable must use the likeness between God and man, or between one man and another man.

In the parable of the Prodigal Son (so called) the likeness of the parable is between the heavenly Father and the earthly father. They are both in the same class of beings. What one does is to be expected in the life of the other. Jesus reasons from the earthly to the heavenly after

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this manner: The heavenly Father is better in all things than the earthly father. The earthly father longs for his wayward son, and welcomes his return with joy. Therefore the heavenly Father is glad when he sees the publicans and sinners—his wayward children—turning to him. The argument should give the name to the parable, and it should be the “Forgiving Father,” not the Wasteful Son.

Sometimes this kind of examination results in spoiling a sermon or in blotting out some pages of good books, but better understanding of the meaning of the text will more than recompense you for such losses. The Bible will speak to you in a clearer voice, and bring a sweeter message.

There is also a view of parables which I may not leave out of consideration. It is said by some that they are predictive. For example, the parable of the Mustard Seed is said to predict the growth of the kingdom, or the church, to such great proportions that it will become a shelter. The parable of the Tares is said to predict a long time of waiting, but at the end of the dispensation will come the judgment. So, also, the parables of the Pounds and of the

Talents predict the judgment. If you think these are predictive, you must inquire about the scope of the parable. Its vision must be large enough to take in the judgment; and anywhere between now and that event will be an appropriate time for the details of the parable to be carried out.

To be frank with you, I must say that I do not think that the predictive element is very prominent, even if it exists at all in the parables. I do not think that Jesus sought to map out the future with any degree of clearness. He sought to impress on men with great force the great principles of his kingdom; and that if these were heeded, good results would follow; if they were not heeded, evil would follow and ripen. It is more in accord with my own reading of it to say that he set forth in that graphic way the ever-present and all-controlling characteristics of his kingdom which are in perpetual operation. The parable of the Tares sets forth the all-the-time truth that evil coexists with good, and we are to be careful in our fight with evil that we do not harm the good; because our business is not punishment of the wicked, but encouragement of the good. Punishment of evil is

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God's business. "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay." The parable of the Dragnet (Matt. 13) tells us that all the time the religious machinery—if we may use the term without offense—all the evangelistic endeavors attract various classes, and gather some who are not truly religious. We are not, therefore, to stop fishing for men. When the time comes God knows which are genuine. He sorts for himself. We will cast the net where he commands. He will attend to the rest in his own time and way.

There is, of course, always a prediction of good in any statement of truth or principle. In the same way there is prediction in planting a good tree. If it grows it will bear good fruit. But planting is not said to be predictive. So I would say that parables have that kind of prediction, though not themselves predictive.

There is another view of parables which is sometimes given; namely, that they were spoken not to instruct, but to conceal truth. Matt. 13:10-17 is quoted to sustain this view. There is this much truth in the saying: they were spoken to hide or partly conceal truth from some of Christ's hearers. But for those who had any heart prepara-

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tion for the truth they were light-bearers. "Blessed," said he, "are the ears that hear what ye hear." Parables did provoke thought, and suggested more than they revealed.

I give you here a partial list of the passages which are called parables by most writers. There are some who include more than others. It is not of importance. Some which I would call the illustrative parables are the following:

The Mustard Seed (Matt. 13). Its lesson to the disciples may be briefly expressed in this: You are not to measure your work by its present appearance. It is destined to be great and glorious.

The Leaven (Matt. 13). The kingdom of God which you are to be connected with is not to win its victories by material forces, nor with great show; but as leaven, in silence and by influence.

Dives and Lazarus. This is utilizing a common belief among the Jews to illustrate the idea that this life "does not end all," but it predetermines all.

The Laborers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20). This illustrates the gracious character of God's dealings with us. In no sense are

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we to "dicker" in religious things. God is just; but he is more than just, he is gracious.

The Hid Treasure. The truth which you preach and the Christian life which you teach are of such worth that when the world sees them it will sell all to obtain them.

The Pearl of Great Price. The Christian truth and the Christian life are such that the God-fearing and truth-seeking, when they learn about them, will give all they have to possess them.

Some which I call argumentative parables are as follows:

The Sower (Matt. 13). Men in secular pursuits are not discouraged by some waste of seed—the harvest remunerates. So you in higher pursuits of a spiritual kind will have remuneration more than enough to compensate for your wasted preaching.

The Pounds (Luke 19). Christians are estimated and given responsibilities according to their intelligence in service.

The Talents (Matt. 25). Christians are estimated and rewarded on the basis of their faithfulness.

The parables of Luke 15 are summed

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up in the argument: "If men and women labor so much to find, and have such joy over finding, how much more the heavenly Father will labor for and rejoice over the return of sinners."

These are sufficient to show you how the division I have made works out.

It is my experience that young people are more surely instructed in the great ideals of life by parables than by any other parts of Scripture. I regret that in the pulpit the exposition of them has fallen so much either into disuse, or gives birth to mere commonplaces.

X

SYMBOLS AND TYPES

I WRITE in this chapter about things concerning which men differ very much. And I have hesitancy in writing because I am sure that what I have to say will be in some conflict with what some of you think to be the truth. But I hope that what I have to say will not be thrown out of the window of your mind as worthless until it has had fair consideration.

Symbols are material things, not images, which are used to teach or to impress present and continuous religious truth. They differ from types in this, they do not have any foretelling element. They do not adumbrate.

There are two classes of symbols. One class called natural symbols, and the other arbitrary symbols. The natural symbol has something in itself which suggests the truth it is used to symbolize. The natural suggestions constitute the value. They reveal

nothing, but they emphasize what is already known. For example, a white robe is a symbol of purity. From the white dresses which the Roman Catholic girls wear at their first communion back to the white angels at the tomb of Jesus, and forward to the four and twenty elders of the New Jerusalem clothed in white, around the great white throne, white is always suggestive of purity.

The tabernacle was very largely symbolic (also typical). It was placed among the people in the midst of the camp, thus impressing the idea that Jehovah was among them. Its inner room was approached only by chosen men, who purified themselves before going in, thus impressing the idea that holiness is a condition of approach to Jehovah. It was costly and beautiful in its construction, thus suggesting the kingly character of God and the luxury—if we may so speak—of being in his service. Inside the holy place the golden candlestick told of God's enlightening influence; the shew-bread told of his care for the temporal wants of men; the veil of the temple constantly reminded men that the way of God was not yet fully open, "while as yet

the tabernacle was standing." But the knowledge that behind the veil the ark of the covenant stood, and was approachable in an appointed way, speechlessly educated hope in men. Thus through all the hours of the day, and for long periods of years, this symbolic tabernacle preached its wordless sermons of righteousness. The texts were "Holiness becometh thy house," and "At thy right hand are pleasures forevermore." No sermons of men have ever preached more truly or more effectively the greatest of fundamental truths than preached these symbolic things of the tabernacle.

The other class, the arbitrary symbols, have little and perhaps no natural symbolism, but their lessons are attached to them by command or appointment. Of these, the rainbow is the first. It was made a symbol, and its lesson was attached to it by the word of God. The ceremonies on the day of Atonement were freighted with lessons which were arbitrarily attached to them. The symbols of baptism and the Lord's Supper are both natural and arbitrary. Baptism symbolizes by its nature purification, but by its official interpretation

it carries the memory of the death of Jesus, and the pledge of a new life and loyalty to him. The Supper is naturally a symbol of companionship and equality, but by appointment it is also a memorial and a prophecy. These Christian symbols will always be like two lighthouses unmoved by winds or currents, to guide the church in its fundamental doctrines of salvation.

The symbolism of numbers has some basis in common usage, but it is much overworked by some interpreters. The greatest difficulty with it is that we have no key to the system. It is said that there is a system consistently followed through the Scriptures. For example, the number four is said to symbolize earthly completeness. Three symbolizes the heavenly department of things. Seven—the sum of four and three—symbolizes the totality of things, and is called the “perfect number.” Twelve is said to symbolize the church of God, or the kingdom itself. One hundred is the symbol for all the saved. I give a list of some passages in which, as is claimed, these numbers are found in their symbolic uses. I do not myself find any instruction in them, nor do I personally believe there is any instruc-

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tion contained in them. It all appears to me like a sort of superstition of about the same grade as the farmer tradition that we must sow our peas and kill our pigs in the right time of the moon. If you care to read something about this matter you will find it in the works of Philo and the book of Enoch.

The following are some of the passages usually quoted to substantiate the notion of the symbolism of numbers:

Four, Gen. 2:10; Josh. 21:18; Ezra 1:5-17; Amos 1:3-13; Dan. 7:2-7; Matt. 24:31; Acts 10:11; Rev. 4:4-8; John 4:35.

Seven, Gen. 7:2; 8:10-12; 29:27; Exod. 7:22; Josh. 6:4, 6, 8, 13; Matt. 15:34; Acts 6:3; 21:28; Rev. 1:4-12.

Twelve is found in the twelve sons of Jacob, the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve apostles, the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem, the twelve gates of the city, etc.

Types are actions and institutes which express or accomplish in small degree spiritual results which are to be accomplished later on in a much completer degree by the word of Christ. They have a real value at the time of their existence, but they point

forward in a predictive way to their own better fulfilment. For example, the sacrifices accomplished in some degree the reconciliation of the sinner who offered them. But they also contained a prediction of reconciliation much more full. They did not predict events in history, but only results in religious life.

No man as a man was a type of Christ, but David or Moses might do official acts which were typical. The high priest himself was not a type of Christ, but the high priest as an official did things in his office that were typical of Christ's high priestly work. I hope I have made this plain, for it is a great safeguard against fanciful interpretation of types. Men may be *illustrations* of what Christ was and did, but that is quite different from being types.

Again, types are appointed by God, not invented by men. Any man can put things into symbolic uses, but no man can make a type. That needs foresight, and we have none of that. Our sight backward is more or less good, but we cannot see ahead. If anything is really a type, God made it so. And therefore we must ask carefully what he made typical.

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I think we are all safer when we keep close to shore in the matter of types, and do not use anything as such if it is not so used in the Scriptures. I do not mean to say that there was no typical thing which is not mentioned in the New Testament. If the tabernacle was a type it was all typical, whether the details of it were mentioned or not; but inasmuch as the matter is so indeterminate, it is well not to venture far beyond the New Testament interpretation of it.

Again, it seems pretty certain that the Jewish people themselves did not understand the ceremonies to be typical. Some of their more thoughtful ones may have seen that something better must come, because the offerings could not fully satisfy their hearts; but they had no idea that these types were intended to prophesy common things; and if they had such an idea they did not know what things were prophesied. What the types teach as types, not as symbols, the New Testament alone must tell us.

One may then well ask, What is the importance of the study of them? If Christ is the fulfilment, why trouble ourselves about the shadow after the reality has

come? I think if you look it over carefully you will find that types do actually affect men's minds very much. Both in their ideas of the atonement and their ideas of death and heaven people frame their conceptions on the so-called types. It is well, therefore, to have the matter well in hand to correct when necessary, and to utilize legitimately this typological kind of interpretation.

Our great and almost only help on the meaning of types is to be found in the book of Hebrews. This book was written, as its contents show, to bridge the gulf which, to the pious Hebrews, seemed to exist between the Christian's religion with scarcely any ceremonies and the Jews' religion which was full of ceremonies which God had given. They thought either that God was not in both or the interpretation was wrong. Hebrews shows that the heart of the new religion was in the Old, that the Old was all the time confessing its own incompleteness, and that Christianity was in embryo in the Old Testament. The author then points out how the promise contained in ordinances has been fulfilled by the work of Christ, and that the cessation of ceremonies is not

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due to their original incompleteness, but to their present fulfilment; the bud has become a blossom.

Let us turn now to examine a little some of the types which are unmistakably pointed out in the New Testament. We will take the sin offering. The ceremonial law provided that at certain times the high priest should offer a goat as a sin offering for the people of Israel. But it was to be burnt, not on the altar of the tabernacle, but "without the camp" (Lev. 16; 23:26-32; Num. 29:7-11). In connection with the ceremony another goat was to be sent off into the wilderness. Now what did these things express? They were, when taken together, a ceremony which was understood to say that the break in the relations of men to God, which came by sins of weakness or ignorance, was restored, and their sin was pardoned. It did not at that time show Christ's death to any one. But when Christ had died, then the writer of Hebrews said that what was a mere hint of truth presented in that sacrifice was more fully and permanently presented in the death of Christ. It was no new truth, but the old

one in fuller measure and in clearer light. Sacrifice and forgiveness, and the sacrifice first.

Take the case of Melchizedek. He is called a type of Christ. Melchizedek was a man whose priesthood was not a matter of race. He was not priest because his father was, nor did he have a temple or a tabernacle; but he was a priest because he loved and honored God. So Jesus, not being a son of Levi, was not a regular priest. But he had a priesthood of the same kind that Melchizedek had, based upon his own character and faith. In this his work was typified. Our approach to and communion with God are not due to Levi nor the law, but come through an outside source, which we might call our Melchizedek.

So you can go through Hebrews and see that what we may call diluted truth was set forth in the sacrifices, but crystal truth (truth of the same kind) was presented in Jesus' sacrifice. The *dilution* of truth about heaven was in the land of Canaan; the truth in *crystal* was given in Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of heaven.

But now you are asking, What do the types teach?

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They teach that God was in that early history planning for the later history. If that is true, then the Christian religion is not an evolution of men's philosophy nor their theology, but a matter of divine preparation.

They show what truths God thought to be permanent and important—those which he thus so patiently and progressively taught through symbol and type.

They help us to interpret Jesus' work.

They are a framework for all our thinking on the matter of our relations to God. Every great problem which a serious soul meets is dealt with in the ceremonies and in their fulfilment. For example, "How shall a man who is a sinner be just with God?" The ceremonial law told him at once, and Christ is only the larger and clearer "way." Who can come to God? The ceremony said, Those who are included in the high priest's offering. And Christ said, He gave himself a ransom for many. What is the great and first thing for a sinner to do? The types said, Make atonement with God. The New Testament says that in more unmistakable language. The truth is we cannot think much on these lines and

not find ourselves following the trail marked out by the types.

For these reasons it is good to read and think about the book of Hebrews.

I give you here as a guide to this book of Hebrews the bare outline of its argument on these matters :

1. Chap. 1:1 to 2:18. *Jesus is the ideally perfect Redeemer.*

(1) He is perfect in his person (1:1-14). Son of God. Heir of all things. Creator of all. Preserver of all. Redeemer of all. Superior to angels. Destined king of all.

(2) He is perfect in his mediatorial work (2:5-18). As the head of the race. Perfect in official qualification. Perfect by reason of his humanity.

2. Chap. 3:1; 10:17. *He perfectly fulfils prophecy.* As embodied in Moses' leadership. As found in the high priestly office. As seen in the priestly work of Melchizedek.

XI

ARGUMENTS

WE come in this chapter to the matter of arguments in the Scripture. It is generally understood that Paul was a logician. It is not so generally noticed that Jesus was such. I think if you study Jesus' words with this in mind you will find that Jesus was quite as logical as Paul.

Before you consider either of them very much it will be a helpful thing for you to "brush up" your logic a little. Lest your book of logic has been mislaid, let me help your memory a bit: "A syllogism is made up of three statements of such a character that if the first and second statements are true, the truth of the third appears to the reason as necessarily true."

For example, if we say (1) The heavenly Father is never cruel, (2) a good earthly father is like the heavenly Father, (3) we cannot escape the conclusion that the good

earthly father never is cruel. All true arguments are at heart similar to that. But in many of them one of the statements, or premises, is understood, but not expressed. We must therefore think down into them and find what statements are understood though not expressed, and then the argument becomes clear. For example, in the sayings of Jesus (Matt. 6:30), "If God clothe the grass, will he not much more clothe you?" What we ask is, "Why may we think that he will clothe us because he clothes the grass? How does the one imply the other?" It is because there is in thought, but unexpressed, this statement, (1) *God cares more for his creature man than for grass.* (2) Then follows the statement, He cares for the grass enough to clothe it. (3) Therefore he more surely will clothe man.

John 1:49. Nathanael says, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God." By what sort of argument does Nathanael come to that conclusion? It is this: (1) *None but a God-sent man can know what another man is thinking.* (2) *This man knows what I was thinking under that fig tree.* (3) Therefore he is a God-sent man.

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John 3:2. "We know thou art a teacher come from God." The argument is (1) *No man can do miracles without God.* (2) This man does miracles. (3) Therefore he is from God.

Matt. 5:5. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." This implies (1) *To inherit the land is blessed.* (2) The meek will inherit it. (3) Therefore they are blessed.

Matt. 5:9. (1) *To be called the sons of God is blessed.* (2) Peacemakers are called sons of God. (3) Therefore they are blessed.

Matt. 7:9. What father will give his son a stone when he asks for bread? The answer expected is, "No father will do that." But how does that prove that God will hear our requests? Suppose a man does not do so, what has that to do with the case of prayer? The argument is this: (1) *Man is made in God's image.* (2) *What good men do is the miniature of what God will do.* (3) Therefore if a good father will heed his son's petition, God, of whom the good man is an image, will hear us. You see the major premise of that argument is the assumed and well-acknowledged idea

that we are in God's image. If that were not true the argument would be empty. You will find that Jesus' arguments very frequently rest upon a "major premise" that is unexpressed, but is a generally accepted religious idea. You will see the force of his argument when you express that premise.

Paul's arguments are more extended than those of Jesus. They include whole chapters at times, but they are as convincing when they are seen. For example, Rom. 1, 2, 3 constitute a syllogism. It reads in this way: (1) No man who is sinful can be justified before God without some mediation from God. (That is not stated, but implied as a commonly accepted truth.) (2) Neither the Gentiles (chap. 1) nor the Jews (chap. 2, 3) are without sin (3:18). (3) Therefore none of them is justified without intervention from God (3:19). Then he moves on (in 3:21-26) to say, But there is an intervention of grace.

In discovering these arguments you will find it necessary to study carefully the whole situation. But there is no way to get the force of the teaching without this analytic study of the arguments. When you

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have found the bones of the argument you will have found that which will make you strong in your own convictions and strong in your power to teach the passage. Therefore I urge you to seek for it. Read such commentaries as help you in that kind of study. Your teaching will gain a virility which no other study can give it.

As a help to this kind of study I will give you a sort of formula which has always been of great service to me in such study. It is this:

First, inquire diligently what is the particular error or deficiency in the minds of those to whom an argument is addressed? You may assume that the writer had a purpose to correct something, and knew how to direct his thought toward it. For example, in Gal. 5:18-24, what is the specific aim of Paul? Some one says, "It is to show us that we must be led by the Spirit." But that does not fit what he said. Another one says, "It is to show us that we cannot be good without the Spirit's help." But that does not fit the case. If you look back to ver. 16 you will see that he said, "Walk by the Spirit." Then men would ask, "How am I to know what is the

Spirit's way?" and he is answering that query. So he says, in substance, "I will tell you how to know. The road that is marked by fornication, and strife, etc., is the road of the flesh. But the road that is marked by love, joy, and peace, that is the road for you to walk in. Against such there is no law." With this idea in mind every sentence seems to fit like the noiseless stones in Solomon's temple.

Secondly. Inquire diligently what is the particular truth the writer seeks to convey in that part of his writing. By this I mean, not the main current of his thought, but the special contribution of each part to the main argument. An argument is made up of separate ideas. You will not know the matter well unless you know it in detail.

As illustrations, consider Rom. 5: 12-14. First we ask, "What was the deficiency in the mind of the Romans at that point?" It was this: They did not see how any good could accrue to them through the death of Christ. They were not prepared to accept that idea. Paul is supplying that deficiency in their thinking. He therefore must be writing something which bears on that matter of substitution or imputation of one

man's conduct for another man's. He says in substance, "Sin against law is not imputed where there is no law, and therefore sin against law is not punished where there is no law. There was no law until Moses' time, therefore death was not the penalty for broken law before Moses' time."

An Inquirer. If that is true, why did men die before Moses' time?

Paul. They died because of Adam's transgression. He represented them in his sin, and they share with him in the penalty.

Inquirer. How does that connect with your teaching about Christ?

Paul. In this way: Adam was an illustration of the principle of representation. So that by the same principle by which men were condemned in Adam for things they did not personally do, men are credited in Christ with an obedience which was not personally theirs.

This sort of inquiry shows Paul's purpose. That idea of representativeness fits in and completes the argument he was making as a keystone fits and completes an arch.

Good exercise in this kind of analysis is found in the following passages: Rom. 4: 1-8; 5: 1-5; 9: 6-8; Gal. 5: 1-6.

XII

INTERPRETATION OF MIRACLES

BEFORE considering the interpretation of miracles, it is necessary to consider what a miracle is. Without taking the time to consider other definitions, I will say what is the definition I have in mind and which is presupposed in this chapter. A miracle is *a free act of God, wrought out of his usual order for the purpose of manifesting his presence, or approval, or for teaching some truth about himself or his kingdom.*

It differs from a merely supernatural act in that it is not referable to fixed laws, but rests on the free will of God, and may never be repeated.

The philosophy of miracles is the philosophy of God's freedom. The manner in which the miracle is wrought is mystery to us. We may not be able to say whether material laws are suspended or temporarily superseded. The will of God may not be

hedged in by us. He alone decides about the ways and means.

Concerning miracles, various views are held. Some think they were all works of mercy simply. Others say mercy was only an incidental feature. The record shows that some were and some were not works of mercy.

Interpretation is concerned then only as they were revelations of Christ or of God. Some say they were acted parables, or, as I prefer to call them, dramatic actions. That is, the way in which the miracle was performed was intended to give expression to a truth beyond the mere declaration of his power to do it. The kind of things he did, and the kind he left undone; the men he healed, and those he left unhealed; the means he used, and the working without means; the times that he wrought, and the places that he wrought all have a dramatic language which must be studied.

The question arises whether an action is dramatic by intention. For example, was Jesus dramatizing a great lesson when he went on the water to meet the disciples in the fourth watch? (Matt. 14:25.) The record of the fact is simple, but the ques-

tion whether he was acting out in a sort of miniature the history of the coming ages is outside of any mere grammatical answer. If any one thinks he was showing his disciples that there would be stress and storm for his church until in the last part of this dispensation, when he should come again; and that then their victory would be immediate, the proof for that view is not in the form of the record, but must be sought elsewhere. One must ask (1) whether Jesus was accustomed to teach in that way, and if so, (2) did he give any specific interpretations of such actions in any case that would afford a key to the others? (3) Does history since then confirm the interpretation? (4) Does prophecy confirm it?

See also the passages Matt. 4:19; Luke 5:1-11; John 21:1-13; Acts 3:1-20.

In considering these it must be remembered that both words and actions may have plain meanings, and at the same time have, not different meanings nor double meanings, but deeper meanings. For example, the miracle of the five thousand fed suggests at once the supernatural power of Jesus and his sympathy with the hungry crowd. A man might see that and no more. But a

man with a deeper insight would say, "This power and this sympathy are not exhausted by this act of supplying bread. It assures us that deeper wants will find supply in him." The logic of the case would be something like this: This man has supernatural power and helpful sympathy. Such a man's power and sympathy are not exhausted in this act; they are perennial fountains. Such fountains will supply other needs as they arise. The greatest needs are for the sustaining of our spiritual life. Hence we may by this miracle be assured that this man will give us the "bread for our souls." So by an almost instinctive reasoning men would see that that miracle was a revelation of Jesus as the one who supplies the bread from heaven. This he himself taught the people the next day.

The same force of reasoning and the same swiftness of reasoning, in the case of the first miracle, would lead men to see that Jesus supplied that marriage feast with greater abundance of wine and of better quality and with holier joy than any other source of supply had done. Such super-human excellence, when it was appealed to in the sphere of religion, could not fail to

outdo all others in that sphere also. When we consider also that the water jars were themselves identified with the "purifying of the Jews," the heart cannot escape the swift conclusion that Jesus intended to suggest that he would do for men better than the Jewish system had done. To use the phrase of the Scripture found in Isa. 60: 17-22: "For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron."

It must also be considered that Jesus never laid aside his work and his thought as Saviour. Other men are unable to carry their religious work always. They seek relaxation and rest from responsibility in a sort of seclusion. But Jesus "could not be hid." A public man's acts are always watched as indications of his heart thoughts. Jesus could not eat with publicans and not have his act understood as a revelation of his feeling toward them; a declaration that the "wideness of his mercy was the wideness of the sea." It must also be considered that, in view of his clear understanding of the situation when he wrought miracles, he intended to do them at such times and in such manner that their deeper lessons, the swift

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conclusions that thoughtful men would arrive at, would be the ones that he desired them to have.

The lessons of miracles are not within the reach of dogmatic or definite statement. They are dramatic actions, but they suggest, rather than state. They teach by natural and necessary impressions rather than statements. The lessons appear to men with a clearness that is proportioned to their openness of heart and the cultivation of their religious imaginations and judgment.

XIII

THE ARGUMENT OF EXHORTATION

THE Methodist exhorter is generally regarded as a man who, though zealous and pious, is not qualified to explain the Scriptures or teach the church. By his earnestness and courage of appeal he can bring men to a decision or help them to "rise up and walk" spiritually, when the colder blooded teacher will let his audience go home to think it over and, while they are thinking, the fire of impulse goes out. There is therefore a place of usefulness for the mere exhorter. But I have in mind something different.

Exhortation in the Scriptures is something more than teasing men to be good. From the Apostle Paul's standpoint exhortation is the capstone of his letters. They are not finished until the "word of exhortation" has been spoken. With him exhortation is always the harvest of argument. To have vanquished the opposers gave him

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no satisfaction. He wanted them to accept the truth and rejoice in it. Exhortation is the art of pressing a logical conclusion upon the heart and the will. Logic makes plain and certain to the intellect. Exhortation makes the man himself submissive to the decisions of his moral judgment. In this the Scriptures are different from books of theology. They do not describe a set of opinions which men held, but a life one is exhorted to live. Theological matters are discussed in Scriptures, but always with practical aim.

That you may see this in the concrete turn to Rom. 12:1: "I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies living sacrifices," etc. The word "therefore" gathers up all the argument which Paul has presented, and concentrates it on their *will*. But one may ask, What is the force of "by the mercies of God"? The thought may be expressed in this way, "I would move you by a memory of the mercies of God." But there still remains the question, Why do I expect such a memory to move me? And upon study we see that there is at the bottom of the argument the ideas:

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1. *Good men are naturally grateful for kindness received.*

2. *Gratitude prompts some returns for mercies.*

3. *Therefore we should make return to God for his mercies* (see Ps. 116: 12-14) by doing what he asks.

That major premise is a universally recognized truth. It is rooted in our nature, and all the force of gratitude impels us to present our bodies, etc.

Again in Rom. 14: 13, "Let us therefore no longer judge one another." Why not? Because every knee shall bow to God. We are all hastening to that great judgment seat. Our opinions of men are of small account there. But we shall do well if no one is oppressed by sins into which we led him.

Rom. 15: 2, "Let each one please his neighbor for his good." Why? we ask, and this is the answer:

1. Christ is the pattern for us all (unexpressed).

2. Christ pleased not himself, but sought to save others.

3. Therefore we should not make self-pleasing our aim.

Rom. 15: 30, "I beseech you, brethren,

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by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit," etc. Why?

1. The example of our Lord and the influence of his Spirit prompt us to kindness and help toward the saints in Jerusalem.

2. But the errand is fraught with danger at the hands of those in Jerusalem who do not believe.

3. We are taught that God hears prayer for help in our difficult undertakings.

4. Therefore strive with me in your prayers.

All the force of this exhortation would be gone if the sentence No. 3 were denied. If prayer is not answered this exhortation has no force.

Similar lines of inquiry may be followed in 1 Cor. 3:18; 8:9-13; Gal. 5:1; Eph. 6:1; Heb. 12:1; Heb. 12:12; 1 Peter 1:13; 2:1; 4:1.

If I may branch from interpretation a little, I will say that the analysis of this kind of argument is a most useful discipline. Many an exhortation has a good spirit and a good aim, but has no force because there was no argument back of it. You will do well before you exhort to ask "Why should men do as I ask or urge them to do? What

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reason have I to urge upon them which will lead them to do it?" To say, "Oh, please be a good man!" wins nobody. To say something true and important first, and then say, "Therefore, be a good man" may have hope in it.

XIV

PUT YOURSELF IN HIS PLACE

MANY years ago Charles Reade wrote a story dealing with the labor question in England. It was called "Put Yourself in His Place." It gave an impulse to sociological study. We cannot do much for men unless we understand them. And we cannot understand them unless we can "put ourselves in their place." The Lord Jesus himself came to "put himself in our place," and it is written that he "learned obedience by the things which he suffered" when he was in our place.

You are saying, "What has this to do with my interpretation?" It has this to do: We cannot understand with any fulness the sayings of men in the Bible unless we can in imagination "put ourselves in their place." If you think that you can, turn it around and ask whether a Jewish convert in Jesus' time if he could come here now would understand the ordinary language of

the Christian world to-day? If he heard them talk about Atonement, and Eternal life, and the Church, and the Millennium, and the Eucharist, and the Bishop, and the Pope, and the Presbytery, Sanctification, Inspiration, Election, Reprobation, etc., would he not understand them, so far as they existed, to mean what they meant when he lived?

It is just as true that we must now seek his point of view to understand what he then said. This is work for our imagination, trained for this duty. In some way or other we must get into touch with the occasion or we cannot get the *best* meaning of the words spoken. (I do not say you cannot get any meaning without it.)

For example, you could learn of Jesus' power if you read that he healed a leper. But that is a very barren view of him compared with the view when you can realize what a condition the leper was in. Read about the leper in the following places: Lev. 13:45, 46; Num. 5:1-4; 12:10-15; 2 Kings 7:3; Lev. 14:1-7. Do you see how depressed, how hopeless, how lonesome he was? Every day brought him not joy and usefulness, but one more day of disgust with life. For him there were no

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tender words of family, no caresses, no kind ministries, no kind words, no social intercourse. Oh, what a life! To such a one Jesus said, "I will, be thou clean," and immediately his flesh was whole. Men gathered about him; his family fell on his neck; the temple was opened for him; God had been gracious!

Or take this man Zaccheus. A publican! Hated man! When the ministers wanted to give a man a bad name they called him "as bad as a publican," just as we now say "as wicked as a saloonkeeper." Yet Jesus, before a crowd, said, "Zaccheus, come down, I will go to dinner with you to-day."

How can we understand the hatred of the Jews for Paul unless we can realize the generations of struggle among themselves and with others to keep out of all their life the contamination of idolatry? and also know the cystallized ceremonialism which made a part of their social life at Jerusalem? Just as royalty enters into the warp and woof of society in London, and ecclesiasticism into all the life at Rome, so, and in a more bitter way, Jewish ceremonialism saturated the business and the social life at Jerusalem. To touch that was

like touching a spider's web; it is reported at the center and thrills to the outer circle. The teaching of Jesus in the fourth of John, and the teaching of Paul in the second of Ephesians, was like a blow down through the web with ruthless hand.

But what I am trying to impress on you is that you will need to read about the times and conditions. History must be your helper continually.

Then you will profit by doing what Professor Tyndal used to tell his students to do: "*Visualize the invisible*"; that is, create the surroundings in imagination and be among them. Take the case of the paralytic let down through the roof. Imagine yourself a painter and what you would paint! What kind of a house? Who are these people in the house? Are they men or women? How would you paint that man at Jesus' right hand? That old man across the room, he is the ruler of the synagogue; what sort of expression would you put on his face? Now change your occupation and be a reporter. What did this man's friends say to him when they were getting him up on the house? What did he think about it? When he went home what did he do?

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Take the case of Judas when he used to steal from the poor-fund. How was that affecting his attitude toward Jesus?

Try and enter into the situation of Jesus. He has endeavored to help men. He has preached nothing but right things. He has held out the promise of help and of forgiveness; but those men in the temple, whom he was brought up to revere, are not only refusing to heed his word, but are plotting to kill him. Think of a young man now, brought up under some aged minister, who finds out that his honored pastor is a covetous, revengeful man, whose religion is all sham, and who does not hesitate to plan murder to keep men from denouncing him in his own church. When you can realize that man's feelings then you may understand his anguish of heart when Jesus said, "Ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the condemnation of hell?"

Some of you may say, "Oh, we don't want imagination. We want facts." Yes, but some of the facts are reached only by the imagination. It is a fact that anger shows in a man's face. You may be sure that the scribes did not smile on Jesus. And it is a fact that the meaning of words

is made potent by their circumstances. You do not get the facts about the meaning unless you can somehow get into the atmosphere of the occasion. So again I say, try by all means and great study to "put yourself in the place" where things were said, and thus get the subtle suggestions which otherwise will be unknown to you.

(Good books to help you in this will be lives of Paul, by Farrar, or Conybeare and Howson, or Stalker, and lives of Jesus by Farrar, or Geikie, or Edersheim; "History of New Testament Times," by Matthews. But, above all, read the New Testament and use your imagination in re-creating the scenes.)

XV

CROSS-QUESTIONING

I WANT to give you in this chapter some illustrations of the ideas I gave you in a former one about the question method. Let us take one of those passages which often give perplexity to readers. The eighth of Romans and the twenty-ninth verse: "Whom he did foreknow them he did predestinate," etc.

Many a man stumbles over this word "predestinate" on the very threshold of the passage, and never gets beyond the door. He says, "I don't want anything to do with predestination. I don't believe in it, and I won't believe in it." That is not your attitude, I am sure. Put this passage on the witness stand and cross-examine it. What is the purpose of Paul's argument in this part of the letter?

Looking back to verse 18 he says, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that

is to be revealed in us." But (in ver. 23) he says, The glory is not yet revealed; on the contrary, even those of us who have the beginning of the Spirit groan as we wait for full redemption. We are looking forward to something yet to come. We live in hope, not in possession. We are not left to fight our way alone, but the Spirit helps us. You see that he is encouraging those who, while awaiting the glory that is to be revealed, are in danger of getting discouraged because it is not already in sight. So he added to his words another element of encouragement, "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God."

Yes, says Brother Doubtful, but how do we know it?

We know it, Paul says, because, "Whom God foreknew he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son." For that is the glory which is to be revealed. That is his great purpose, and it cannot fail unless God himself fails.

Yes, says Brother Arminius, but I do not like that word "predestinate." Well, says the interpreter, I do not see what there is to dislike in it. God must have some purpose

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concerning his own. It would be no comfort to think that he left us to work our own salvation without any of his guidance or help, and thus make life a sort of wild, aimless junketing party. And if he has any aim, or purpose, what better one than that we should be conformed unto the image of his Son? It seems to me that when God was planning for us we may think of him as asking, What shall we do for those who are believers in Jesus, and who confess him in the world? We might make them immortal in the world. We might give them wealth and dominion on earth. We might bring the world to their feet. But that is not enough to satisfy either our love or Christ's love for them. No, we will not stop until they are made into Christ's image, that he may be the firstborn among many brethren.

But, says Brother Careful, will this idea bear inspection?

Let us compare it with other passages and see. Eph. 1:5 says, "Having predestinated us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 3:18 says, "Changed into his image from glory to glory." 1 John 3:2 says, "When he shall appear we shall

be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Phil. 3:21 says, "He will change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Then in 1 Cor. 15:51-57 we learn that the final consummation of this eternal purpose will come at the "last trump." This is an underlying thought in Paul's writings. We have "struck a vein of ore." So this passage is really not a lion to tear us, but a messenger of comfort and courage. We are to work out our own salvation, but it is God working in us to complete his purpose (Phil. 2:12).

Let us try another passage. Rom. 5:15. After reading this in various versions you will see that some read "let us have peace," and others "we have peace." Which is right? Looking back, we see that Paul has been stating that we are justified by faith. He has argued that fully and completely. He is not exhorting now. He is summing up the results of that justification. Therefore he says, "If we are thus justified we have peace with God. And not only so, but we have a glorying in the midst of tribulation. It is because tribulation works patience, and patience works experience, and experience works hope. If tribulation then

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brings more hope, we will rejoice in the midst of it."

But, says Brother Fearful, suppose our hope should turn out to be empty. We are bearing a great deal of trouble for a mere bubble of hope. What you call hope will put us to shame. Is there not something more substantial?

Certainly, says Paul. We have already the beginnings of what we hope for. We have the "earnest" of our inheritance.

Well, what is it? says Brother Timid.

It is this; we have now existent in our hearts the same kind of love that Christ has. God's kind of love is shed abroad in our hearts. That is the beginning of his image in us. We love men in some degree as he does; we love God in some degree as he does; we obey God in some degree as he does; the divine love has been shed abroad in our hearts; it touches and blesses all our being. Therefore we will glory in affliction.

Take another. John 10:1-6. If you ask Brother Hasty-Conclusion what this means, he tells you at once, It means that those who are trying to get into the kingdom of heaven on their merits, as for example the moral-

ists, are thieves and robbers. They are climbing up into the kingdom some other way.

But, Brother Hasty, what makes you think that is the meaning?

That is plain. Do not the moralists climb up some other way? and these thieves climb up some other way? therefore moralists are the thieves and robbers."

Well, Brother Hasty, I do not want to laugh at serious things, nor on serious occasions; but I cannot help remembering in this connection a lesson in logic I learned when I was a boy. It was this: "A plucked goose is a biped destitute of feathers. A man is a biped destitute of feathers. Therefore a man is a goose without feathers."

But, says Brother Hasty, I always have heard it preached from in that way.

Well you say, let us see for ourselves. To whom was Jesus speaking?

To the Pharisees, the teachers of Israel. What had he been talking about?

He had been telling them that they were blind, and they were not of God.

Has he turned his attention to others?

No, he is still talking to them, as teachers of Israel.

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What kind of discourse is this?

It is allegory.

What is the story, or basis of the allegory?

Some men, who are not the shepherds, try to get to the flock for their own advantage, not the good of the flock. They knew this, and they knew that the sheep would not come at their call, so they tried to get in by some other way than the proper way.

Whom do these thieves represent? How will we find the meaning of the story?

I should make this reply: We must make a hypothetical interpretation and see if it will fit the case. Suppose we say this: The fold represents the nation or family of Israel. In that family are some of the real children of God and some who are not. The sheep need shepherding and teaching. They hunger after God, but they do not know him very well. The porter represents that inner sense of God which good men all have; a sort of instinct for the truth. The door is the way of approach which God made, the divinely chosen ideas of himself, the story of his love in Christ, which will fit the hunger of men's souls. Now see if this will fit the case. These

teachers come to the Israelitish nation as teachers. They come with a lot of ceremonialisms, which are stones instead of bread. They come, not in the way the prophets had foretold, with the story of a suffering and loving and meek Messiah, but with the story of a conceited and fear-inspiring earthly king. The porter in the hearts of men does not respond to that sort of a message. The God-loving people would not, could not follow such teachers. They had an instinctive fear to trust them. Does that fit the case? I think it does. And it fits what Jesus said afterward, "I am the door to the sheep. If you had preached me to them, the true children of God would have followed you. You would have gone in and out and found pasture for them."

Take another. John 3:14-18. At first we notice that this is a simile. Then we ask for the point of comparison. What does this mean? "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness?" We will not go to the sermons we have heard about this, but to the account itself. Let us read the story. All the camp of Israel was in trouble. Fiery serpents were abroad and the bitten people

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were dying in great numbers. There was no medicine! No help! No hope! Some were calling on God; others were cursing Moses; all were troubled. Then Moses, at God's command, made a brazen serpent and put it on a pole in the midst of the camp where all could see it, and said, "Every one that looks on this for cure will find it." How did Moses lift up the serpent? Is Jesus concerned to know what sort of a pole he used? Certainly not. Is he concerned to know what kind of a serpent he lifted up? No. Is he thinking mainly of what happened to the serpent? No; but to the people. Was the serpent killed? No; there was no serpent, but only the image of a serpent. It could not be killed, for it was not alive. We see then that Moses lifted up the serpent (1) as a God-sent deliverance; (2) as the only deliverance; (3) as an effectual deliverance; (4) to be accepted by faith. Now come back to Jesus' words, "As Moses lifted up the serpent." How? (1) As a God-sent deliverance; (2) as an only deliverance; (3) as an effectual deliverance; (4) to be accepted by faith. "So shall the Son of man be lifted up" into view—that is,

preached to all men so that they can know about him—that “whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but may have eternal life.” This is then a comparison of Moses with preachers. They are to lift up as he lifted up. They are to do it at God’s command, as he did his work at God’s command. And as the looking on the serpent gave deliverance, so believing on Jesus will give salvation from sin and life eternal.

It is not then a prophecy of crucifixion, but a word to the preacher to lift up Christ and a promise to the sinner that he will be saved if he looks unto Christ.

XVI

INTERPRETATION OF BOOKS

MY letters have been so far more especially directed to the interpretation of texts and limited passages. This does not, as you know, reach the limit of your field. There is a larger view to be taken, in which you will need to see the single books as single objects. They are, it is true, made up of a collection of single thoughts, but the collection is made in the interest of some specific purpose. One may go into a gallery where all the available pictures, of Doré for example, are gathered. Each picture has its value and a kind of completeness. But to know Doré as an artist one must see the whole collection. Then he sees him on all sides and has a just view of him. So one may see parts of Romans, for example, and not be without profit; but we need to see all the Epistle to get its best thought.

Usually each book is a discussion of some

important theme or topic which came up in the religious life of a church, or of an individual. It may be that you have not yet met all such, but they will come up in due course of your life. To have studied these single discussions will have prepared you for the issue when they do come up. The interpreter is like a druggist who knows where the various kinds of remedies are; when he wants to put his hand on them, he can do it at once. I am one of those old-fashioned fellows who believes, and is not ashamed to own it, that the Old Testament was gathered out of a mass of literature by men whose wisdom is justified by their work, and that the collection was properly described by Paul in 2 Tim. 3:15. And I also believe that the men of the second century gathered out of the mass of literature then existent the New Testament which, by the character of it, justly may be included in Paul's category for the Old Testament.

How then shall we get the best interpretation of any single book? First, read it through several times, until you can throw it up in your mind in a sort of perspective, and see it all in a single view. This may

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require that you carefully write out a list of the chapters according to their contents and fix that list in your mind by act of memory.

Secondly, read what you can get in your library to put you in touch with the circumstances of the writing.

Thirdly, inquire who wrote this? Was it a man who can be trusted to know what he was writing about?

Fourthly, what was the reason for his writing? Did the ones to whom he wrote need his letter? and if so, why?

Fifthly, begin to analyze the book, and find its framework.

Sixthly, having found this, read it again and get its real force and meaning.

For the sake of impressing this on your mind, will you go with me through an outline study of Galatians?

Read it through several times. Now, this says at the outset, "Paul, an apostle, not from men," etc. Bring all your memory and knowledge of Paul into prominence. The great apostle, whose life in former days was told us in Acts from the ninth chapter onward—this is the man who writes this letter to Galatians. No trifler was he.

Not an emotionalist, but a teacher, deep and logical.

Who are these people to whom he writes? The Galatians. What do we know about them? Get the map and see where they lived. Now look up in your Bible dictionary, "Galatian Epistle." Then read Acts 13 and 14 to get an idea of the character of the people in those churches.

Next, what does this letter say about them? Chapter one, verse six, tells us that they had believed and under the influence of false teachers were turning away from their faith to something else. Verse 8 shows you that Paul was much in earnest and greatly disturbed about them. They seem to be "bewitched" (3:1). Then in 1:11 he sets forth a certain definite proposition, which he at once begins to make plain and to prove. It is this: The gospel which I preached is not according to man, and is therefore the only true gospel.

Now when we examine the letter from this on we see that all the way through two chapters what Paul says is in the nature of proof that his *gospel is true*. It is first an argument from his own experience and connection with it. Then in 3:1-5 he ap-

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peals to their personal experiences. And then all through the rest of the chapter and the next one, except a parenthesis in 4: 8-20, we find him arguing his case from the Old Testament Scriptures. From there on we find that he gave himself to exhortation of various sorts, up to 6: 11.

Thus we see the general outline. First, *argument to establish the truth of the gospel as he preached it*. Secondly, *exhortations based upon his argument*. That is a good lesson in preaching. Establish the truth and then exhort; not exhort without truth, nor before truth.

Now let us examine more closely his proof. (1) God revealed his Son in me as my Saviour (1: 15, 16). (2) He commissioned me. (3) I preached it many years with success (18: 24). (4) The leaders at Jerusalem approved it (2: 1-6). (5) The apostles themselves gave me fellowship (7: 10). (6) I rebuked and discomfited Peter in his dissent, showing him that the real transgressor of the law is he who refuses to let it lead him to Christ for justification (11-21). (7) Your own experience confirms it (3: 1-5). (8) Abraham's experience confirms it (6). (9) The promise to

Abraham confirms it. (7-9). (10) God's faithfulness requires it (15-18). (11) The law itself declares it (19-29). (12) The providence of God confirms it (4:1-7; (parenthetical exhortation, 4:8-20). (13) The allegory of Sarah and Hagar teaches it (21-31).

What an array of proof that is! His experience, their own experience! and the Scripture teaching in several ways. Now let us go back and examine the character of this thing which he has proven so well. What is it all about? What is his "Gospel"? It is found in 3:26: *Ye are all sons of God by faith in Jesus*. That is the thing he so earnestly defends. Some one was teaching those Galatians, who had once been happy in faith, that some ceremonies of the old religion were necessary. Paul says, *You are sons of God by faith in Jesus*. That is all! Nothing more to it! No circumcisions! No sacrifices at Jerusalem! No self-inflicted penances! But faith in Jesus! If you have that you have it all.

Now we can see the value of his exhortation in 5:1: *Stand fast in the liberty from these ceremonies, which Christ gives you. Be not entangled again in the yoke*

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of bondage. Listen to the inside voice which the Spirit of God uses and walk by it. And if you are in doubt concerning the path which is right, let this rule be a guide to you: the works of the flesh are these (5: 19-21). But the path of the Spirit is marked by these fruits (5: 22-26).

Now in chapter 6 he thinks of those who might be overtaken in a fault, and fail to walk as they ought. Toward these he says be not only charitable, but helpful; beware of all who come pressing on you any ceremonialism. In Christ these things do not count. *It is the new heart of faith that makes you sons of God.*

What do we get then as the "word" from this Epistle? This: What we all need to make us "Sons of God," and therefore put us in line for receiving all those heavenly blessings which a heavenly Father's love delights to bestow is—not some ceremonies, or many; not to agonize in soul under any sort of penance; not to commit numerous self-denials, or semi-crucifixions—but to know that Christ died for our sins that he might bring us to God, and obediently submit ourselves to him. If we do that, we come at once into a liberty

from fear and anxiety about the future which enables us to live in the joyous attitude toward God of "dear children."

That message certainly has not become old-fashioned. Nor has the opposition to it waxed old. It still combats the true gospel. And therefore the minister of Christ still has need and use for the message of Paul to the Galatians.

XVII

INTERPRETATION AND BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

IN the old-fashioned days, when theological seminaries were scarce, and those which were in existence were contemptuously called "preacher mills," young ministers were expected to make out for themselves what was called a "body of doctrine." This was a statement of the leading doctrines of the Christian religion, with the passages of Scripture from which they were drawn. In those days, when books were rare, it was a most painstaking work. It meant a reading of the whole Bible, and strenuous thinking as one went along. This process resulted in some curious conclusions, but it gave those men a familiarity with the Scriptures and an independent way of dealing with them which this generation might have to its great profit. This "body of doctrine" is now called by the more pretentious name of biblical theology. It is a

word about this important subject which I wish to write in this chapter.

I suppose there are those who, at first thought, may ask, "Why call it biblical theology? Is not all theology biblical? And if it is not biblical, is it theology at all?" Paul said, in Romans, "The invisible things of God are clearly seen in the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." If that is true, then there is theology where there is no Bible. It is natural theology. And so the men who make names for us have divided the subject of theology into subdivisions, and named them: natural theology, which can be learned from nature without any Bible; biblical theology, which is to be learned from the Bible; and systematic theology, which is the combination of all kinds of theology into one system. The first and vital thing in forming biblical theology is correct interpretation of the various books which compose the Bible. Hence the fitness of my alluding to the matter here.

You will recall that, as you have read the various books of the Bible at one time and another, you have noticed a smaller and less loving conception of God in some books

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than in others. There is a much more clear idea of our relations to all men in the New Testament than in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament the motives and the hopes of religious men are connected more with this world and its comforts than with the next world; while in the New Testament the reverse is true. All this shows that it would not be wise to take any single part of the Bible as the ultimate standard of our theology. It would be at best but fragmentary. We must take the matured experience, and, so far as it has been given, the matured revelation into our material for the construction of our "body of doctrine." You will see at once then that we need to begin at the earliest of the writings and move on through the ages, and trace the development of religious ideas. For myself (although I am aware that some do not agree with me in doing so), I assume that the Bible never gives contradictory ideas of God or of theology. There are very incomplete views given. Men had one-sided and narrow conceptions. But the true ideas were always present in any *teaching which had divine sanction*. One writer of more enlightenment, or of later date,

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may give views beyond those which another writer gives.

I am not writing you a letter on biblical theology, but only some things to be taken into account in the interpretation of Scripture when you are making your biblical theology. These are some of the things to be remembered:

The Scriptures are the expressions of the thoughts and experiences of men in the age when they were written. You would not expect to find, and you do not find, men in the book of Job saying anything about the comfortable hope of the resurrection. They knew nothing about it, and therefore they said nothing about it. And if you were making your theology from Job it would not contain a hint that such a hope can be cherished. Water cannot rise higher than its source. The whole is not greater than the sum of all its parts. Your theology cannot contain more than the sources from which you get it. What I have said about the matter of resurrection is equally true about the character of God. You will not expect to find men in the Psalms speaking about God as those who knew God in Paul's time. They did not

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misconceive him, but they only partially conceived him. God was not different, but the knowledge of him was less full.

Their knowledge of God was obtained, in large measure at least, through their education. And their education came from their surroundings, plus some element of revelation. This means, of course, that their ideas of God and of religion were more or less the ideas of their age. You will not then be surprised to find the older writers speaking as we would not speak. If God was spoken of as King and Lord, it must be understood that they thought of him as *they* thought of kings and lords, and not as we think of kings and lords. To us Americans a king is a nuisance. Mr. Carnegie said, "Every royal family is an insult to every other family." But the Israelites did not think of their Messiah as a nuisance, nor the Davidic family as an insult to every other family.

It is necessary therefore to take large circles of observation in order to get the atmosphere of the times. You will do it best by reading whole books of the Bible at a time, and those books which were written about the same time. Read them

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not to get any religious doctrines, but to get the true social and religious perspective of each book. Above all, avoid getting lessons or sermons from them at such times.

Compare the perspective of one book with that of another, and note what increment of progress has appeared, and how it came about. This is one of the most helpful of exercises. It may also be profitably coupled with a study of the religions of the surrounding nations at that time. You will perhaps find many things in common in the lower spheres of all religions, but you will be greatly impressed with the large margin of spiritual superiority which the Bible ideas have when compared with other national religions.

Do not attempt to make any book tell more than it knows, nor be disappointed when you do not find all you want in it. Each book has its purpose. It is a good reliable writing *on that purpose*. It contributes a satisfactory element on its own theme. For example: the letter to the Galatians does not give you anything about the resurrection, nor the gifts of the Spirit, nor the unity of the church. But if you want to get the truth about justification by faith

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you will not be disappointed in that book.

The latest book is not always the highest in its teaching. The book of Acts is later than Paul's letters, but his letters are in advance of the teaching recorded in Acts. The maturer doctrine is the one that reaches the larger circle, and is the most spiritual.

When you have traced the teaching of the Bible in this way you will have formed in your mind a conception of the Christian religion which will be large, clear, sound, and convincing. You will have so traversed the ground that you will fear no by-paths of error and no upsetting of your conclusions. With these methods you can formulate your own doctrines with confidence. You can test the teachings of others with an independent judgment. You can meet your most intelligent hearers with an open face and an honest eye after every sermon or class.

XVIII

THE ULTIMATE TRUTH

I HAVE written you now all these letters, in which I have traveled rapidly over a broad field. At the very best you have only caught some ideas of how to discover the truth that the Scripture contains.

But there is now a matter left until this late date of more importance than all else, and that is this: Your search must be for Christian truth. You might use all these suggestions and yet get not much but history or ethics. For example, a man might study the book of Jonah and be very learned about it, and not see that its great aim is not to show the sin of refusing to go where God sends you, nor the providences by which God brings his servants to their duties, but God's great mercy to a wicked nation.

Or one might study Romans and well understand Paul's argument to refute the

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Jewish ideas, but fail utterly to be moved by the teaching of God's graciousness toward men.

How to see these living truths, which are the core of all Scripture—what can I write you about that? Before that task I am bewildered. I will not attempt it. I can only point to a few things which I have found helpful to myself; things which have at various times been the means of new visions of truth.

Remember that the Bible, wonderful book that it is; varied as it is; composed along through centuries by various men, has a remarkable unity of aim. All these various books are, one might say, consciously aiming to furnish us guidance and stimulus toward a godly life. No man who has sense enough to read it can fail to see that every writer was trying in his own best way to contribute toward that end. You may think they blundered, but you cannot think they did not try to lead men to godly lives. Therefore no book of the Bible has been studied aright until it has been searched to find what it sought to contribute toward that end.

Remember that a knowledge of God's

character is fundamental to a godly life, and therefore search the books for what they reveal of him. It is a precious find when you get a fuller view of God.

Remember that Christ Jesus is the one who came into the world to save sinners. He is the Saviour.

All the light of sacred story
Gathers round his head sublime.

Seek to find what light the books throw on him, try to see him as he is; that is the secret of life.

See 2 Cor. 3:12-18; 1 John 3:2, 3; John 17:3; John 3:14-19.

Remember that he tells us the way of salvation. And so among your inquiries ask what light his word gives on that question. This will give value to the doctrinal and practical teachings.

Remember that the greater part of our religious need is not light nor censure, but stimulus. We all know better than we do. What we want is some spiritual impulse, or courage. The Scriptures furnish that in abundance. Read the daily papers and many of the reported sermons and see whether, admitting that all their analyses of

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conduct and rebukes of human meanness are just, they prompt you to be a better man? Or do they simply convince you that this is a wicked world anyway? Then read a few chapters in a Gospel or an Epistle, and see if that makes you feel as the paper did. What makes the difference? The Gospel has hope for you; it sees in you things that are better, and stimulates you. Now, when you study a passage remember that the book was written to *save* and not condemn. Its crystals of goodness, its gold in the ore, are in the thoughts that kindle hope. Search until you find them.

Remember that you can use only one truth at a time. Dwell on one precious truth until it fills you, then it will fill others. Our age is one that requires concentration of thought and effort on single things to make exceptional success. Separate with care and intelligence the precious gems of truth, and think of them until to you they glow like diamonds; and then preach and teach them with utter abandonment. They will not fail.

XIX

TEST OF THE WORK

IN our far-off days of the public school one of the requirements in arithmetic was to "prove the work." No answers were given us. We must know that we were right. Something of that sort is needed in our interpretation of Scripture. Not that we can have the mathematical certainty which we have in arithmetic (though some one did say of Doctor Gordon's work that it was "aerial but mathematically exact exegesis"); but such a moral and intellectual certainty that we can teach it with a clear conscience. By what process then can we test our conclusions?

Compare your conclusions with other men's conclusions who have studied the same passage. You need have no hesitancy about this on the ground of fear lest you be only a parrot, saying other men's words after them. It was said by the wise man, "There is no new thing under the sun"

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(Eccl. 1:9). This age is one that brings the treasures of the world's thought to our libraries. The wise and useful man is he who utilizes the material at his hand, after he has studied the matter. Doctors, lawyers, teachers, statesmen use the product of other men's labors. It will not weaken your mind to consult others, if you will follow their processes of thought. If you simply borrow their conclusions you will dwarf your mind.

Compare your conclusions with the teaching of other passages on the same subject. You may safely assume that there is enough unity of thought in Scripture to secure harmony of teaching. If you find in Matthew an idea of righteousness that seems to differ from Paul's idea in Romans, a comparison will show you that the view in Matthew is only partial, and in Paul partial. Both must be combined.

In this kind of test great care will be needed lest the mere likeness of sound or expression be taken for likeness of thought. Besides that you will need to remember that the mere number of parallel passages is not always of importance. It is their weight. A man once said to me

that he had concluded from the facts mentioned in the Scriptures that no man was ever converted unless some one had personally made him a subject of prayer. There are, no doubt, many things to lead toward that conclusion, but the cases of the eunuch, and Cornelius, and Matthew, and Zaccheus, would seem to make that conclusion uncertain.

There are passages which, considered alone, seem to teach the powerlessness of any man to turn to Christ. But compared with other passages, which seem to teach the opposite, we find the conclusion in Paul's words, "*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure*" (Phil. 2:12).

Compare your conclusion with a well-established system of doctrine. At first thought this, which the older writers call the "analogy of the faith," seems to preclude any right to a new idea. The "doctrine" seems to be the standard, and nothing must be allowed which differs. I do not mean it in that sense; but in this sense: systems of doctrine are the laboriously wrought-out results of the best thinking of

the most godly men of former generations. They were not infallible, but they have a better claim on infallibility taken as a group than you or I have when taken alone. Hesitancy to differ from such conclusions is only commonplace prudence, and common respect for others. If truth compels difference we must differ—fearlessly. The unfortunate divisions of the church in our day into small sects is due to the unrebuked conceit of individuals who, having caught sight of a little gleam of truth new to them, immediately conclude they have discovered a new ocean, and they set about building a ship and begin to engage from the landlubbers in theology a crew to sail it. But behold their ocean was only a little bay, long ago charted as shallow and dangerous. Some one finds Peter's wife's mother cured of fever; then he reads that some one had a gift of healing; and the One Hundred and Third Psalm sings about "healing all our diseases," and so the untrue doctrine is formulated: "*All sickness is Satan's work, and the man who has faith need not be sick.*" There are many men of excellent quality, strong in some directions, whose usefulness has been lessened by their

failure to compare their views of texts with doctrinal writings. It is here that church history has its value.

But while I say this do not understand me to say that you should be bound by any system of man-made doctrines. Advances in knowledge are always made by men who dare to break with tradition. Luther dared to read for himself, and the German Reformation followed. Knox and his fellows uplifted Scotland. Carey dared the lion of orthodoxy in his lair, and swung open the door of salvation to the heathen. Roger Williams broke the bond of subserviency to the State which an Episcopal king had made out of the Episcopal translation of a few texts. No! Do not fear to differ, but fear to differ without good reason.

Compare your interpretations when you can with the experience of Christian men. The Bible is a book aiming to produce Christian experience. No doctrine which cannot be verified in experience is important, even if it is true. It may be, as the old hymn has it, that in the books of heaven

Every Christian's form and size
Is drawn with angelic pen.

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But that has no value to us. Unless you have found an idea or a truth in a text which helps toward producing a Christian life, it is not worth digging out. Therefore seek to become familiar with the religious experiences of others. Much of this can come from reading biographies of Christian men. But the greater source is conversation with Christian people about their experiences. You will often find that the experience of elderly Christians has given them an insight to Scriptures which is clear and deep. Such people are the best sort of exegetes for some parts of the Bible. Keep in touch with the old Bible-reading saints. Do with them as Jesus did with the "doctors" in the temple, *hearing them and asking them questions* (Luke 2: 46). Why should experience be discounted in wisdom's market?

Test your thoughts by your own experience. Jesus said, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." Bible teaching is given, as I have already said, to be experienced. No man has exhausted the purpose or the teaching of the book until its precious promises and its holy ideals have been realized in himself.

And our real understanding of the Scriptures is measured by our own experiences. How can a man learn "forgiveness" from a dictionary? He might as well expect to satisfy hunger by reading the chemical analysis of bread, or thirst by the analysis of water. One must forgive to know forgiveness. One must have felt guilty to know sin. He must have been through Gal. 5:22-25 to know its meaning.

This seems a hard test. It affects seriously the value of such theological stocks as have been heavily watered with mere learning. But the resultant certainty is a compensation for the shrinkage. A friend of mine once said he did not think he knew a text until he had practised it. I think the final test of our interpretations is reducing them to practice. May we all pass that examination.

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